



# **HODDLE GRID HERITAGE REVIEW**

## **VOLUME 2b: Postwar Thematic Environmental History and postwar places**

**July 2020**

**Prepared for  
City of Melbourne**

**CONTEXT**

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### **Project Team:**

**Context**

**GJM Heritage**

**On Country Heritage and Consulting**

**Ochre Imprints**

**Spatial Vision**

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This report register documents the development and issue of the report entitled *Hoddle Grid Heritage Review – Volume 2b: Postwar Thematic Environmental History and postwar places* undertaken by Context in accordance with our internal quality management system. (Volume 2b was also undertaken in consultation with GJM Heritage.)

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### **Context**

22 Merri Street, Brunswick VIC 3056

Phone 03 9380 6933

Facsimile 03 9380 4066

Email [context@contextgml.com.au](mailto:context@contextgml.com.au)

Web [www.contextpl.com.au](http://www.contextpl.com.au)

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## LIST OF TECHNICAL VOLUMES

The Hoddle Grid Heritage Review is reported in a **Summary Report** and a series of technical volumes as follows:

### **Volume 1: Built & Urban Heritage – Methodology**

Volume 1 explains the methodology used to select and assess the heritage values of precincts and individual places identified by the City of Melbourne and others as requiring assessment. This Volume also presents the steps undertaken to ensure that all likely heritage places have been identified and either assessed within the present project or recommended for future assessment.

### **Volume 2: Built and Urban Heritage – Assessed Places & Precincts**

Volume 2 contains heritage assessments and recommendations for individual places and precincts. The material is in the form of citations suited to the recognition of a place on the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Volume 2 is divided into two volumes:

- Volume 2a – Precincts, pre-1945 places, revisions to existing individual Heritage Overlay
- Volume 2b – Postwar Thematic Environmental History and postwar places

### **Volume 3: Aboriginal Heritage**

Volume 3 explains the approach to Aboriginal heritage for the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review. It explores the concept of shared heritage, the scope of contemporary Aboriginal heritage and the policy context. It describes the important role played by the three Traditional Owner organisations. Volume 3 explains the thematic analysis that was applied in framing the history (Volume 4) and describes how places were identified, mapped and an expanded Aboriginal Places List created. It also briefly outlines the pre-contact Aboriginal archaeological component. Through a co-research model, the three Traditional Owner organisations selected and researched specific places, and these are presented in this volume along with recommendations for recognition and interpretation of Aboriginal history and values. One place is recommended for inclusion in Heritage Overlay and the citation is therefore presented in Volume 2.

### **Volume 4: Aboriginal History - Hoddle Grid**

Volume 4 presents a history of the Hoddle Grid study area in relation to Aboriginal history, connections and places. It builds on an earlier project (Context, 2010), adopts an Aboriginal and shared history thematic framework, develops each theme briefly and identifies place examples. The three Traditional Owner organisations recognised by the City of Melbourne (CoM) have been involved in reviewing the themes and identifying associated places.

### **Volume 5: Pre-Contact Aboriginal Archaeology of Hoddle Grid**

Volume 5 presents an analysis of the pre-contact Aboriginal archaeology across the Hoddle Grid study area, considering prior land and water forms, vegetation and other factors that influenced Aboriginal land uses and activities over the estimated 40,000 years of Aboriginal occupation of south-eastern Australia. This information is then related to the evidence that has been uncovered through recent archaeological excavations. The result is a spatial model designed to predict the likelihood of uncovering evidence of pre-contact Aboriginal sites within the Hoddle Grid area. The model also considers past ground disturbance. It is designed so that it can be regularly updated. The model has been discussed with Traditional Owners and key government bodies, and recommendations are made on how to increase the assessment and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage ahead of redevelopment in the Hoddle Grid study area.

## Volume 6: Communications & Engagement

Volume 6 documents the development and implementation of a Communications and Engagement Plan for the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review. Specific elements of engagement are detailed including the involvement of both internal and external stakeholders, engagement with Traditional Owner Organisations, the Participate Melbourne and Melbourne Conversations activities and the opportunities to develop interactive digital and other forms of public information.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AHC	Australian Heritage Council
AV	Aboriginal Victoria
BP	Before Present
CASM	Corporate Affairs and Strategic Marketing
CBD	Central Business District
CHMP	Cultural Heritage Management Plan
CoM	City of Melbourne
ERG	External Reference Group
HCV	Heritage Council of Victoria
HERMES	Victoria's Heritage Database supported by Heritage Victoria
HO	Heritage Overlay
HV	Heritage Victoria
KHT	Koorie Heritage Trust
MMRA	Melbourne Metro Rail Authority
MMBW	Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works
VAHR	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register
VHI	Victorian Heritage Inventory
VHR	Victorian Heritage Register

## **POSTWAR THEMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY 1945-1975**

# City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review

Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975

March 2020

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*Figure 1. Aerial view of Melbourne, 1959 (State Library of Victoria H2016.33/35)*

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# Introduction

## Melbourne in the Postwar Period

*Between 1950 and 1970, Melbourne became – for the first time since the 1880s – the fastest growing city in Australia. Perhaps more than any other Australian city, it exemplified the Fordist paradigm of urban growth – high investment in manufacturing, especially of protected consumer products such as cars and electrical goods, high levels of immigration, high levels of car and home ownership and high levels of government intervention in the provision of infrastructure. Melbourne became the main beachhead of American economic and cultural influence, and the leading centre of modernist innovation in art, architecture and design.*

Graeme Davison, 'Welcoming the World: the 1956 Olympic Games and the re-presentation of Melbourne' in J Murphy and J Smart (eds), *The Forgotten Fifties: aspects of Australian society and culture in the 1950s*, p. 65.

The twentieth century represented Australia's coming of age. The post-World War II period was intrinsically linked to the concepts of progress, prosperity and expansion. Governments across the country became official patrons for this notion of progress, which became increasingly associated with a modern aesthetic in art, architecture and design. European and American influences on architecture in particular became an optimistic expression of post-war recovery – a vision of progress towards a brighter and better future (Lewi & Goad 2019:22-24).

For Melbourne, the years between 1945 and 1975 were characterised by great social, cultural and physical transformation. In the immediate postwar years, Melbourne was a city 'in the doldrums' (Lewis et al 1993:203). Building activity was at a standstill and an atmosphere of stagnation hung over its centre. An editorial in the *Herald* lamented that 'too many old, two-storey buildings front our main streets' while influential architect, Robyn Boyd, denounced 'the commercial slums of the city', despairing at the lack of office space and the 'derelict little buildings' that populated the city centre (*Herald* 21 March 1955:3).

The 1950s heralded dramatic changes. As author and historian, Robyn Annear, attests, it was at this time that:

*Melbourne was being remade. It was always being remade, but from the mid-1950s the city was falling over itself in the pursuit of progress* (Annear 2014:xi).

This was a period of great optimism and energy – the lifting of constraints on building materials in 1952 and the gradual recovery of Melbourne's economy brought a new-found confidence to the city. The rise of car ownership, the introduction of television to Australia, the hosting of the Olympic Games, and the arrival of a million immigrants from Europe and the UK over a 20-year period contributed to the substantial cultural, social and physical transformation of the city (MV).

The explosion of construction from 1953 onwards was a dramatic turning point in the evolution of central Melbourne, with the demolition of older buildings considered to be a 'sign of progress, prosperity and expansion' (*Port of Melbourne Quarterly* 1958:11-15). In 1959, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that:

*For the five years ended September 30 last year (1959), the MCC handled building applications valued at nearly 52 million pounds...In the central business area, 102 buildings were erected during the five years. Prominent among these were those erected by large companies as their Australian headquarters, which evidenced the confidence of business enterprise in the future of Australia and of Melbourne in particular* (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 May 1960:5).

During this period, Melbourne asserted itself as a forward-looking international city by embracing the new-found architectural language of Chicago and New York and rejecting the applied decoration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by the steel and glass office tower design in the United States, stood in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne.

Part motivated by a surging national pride, and part driven by the need to provide increased accommodation and lettable space for the expanding city, the introduction of the postwar office block transformed the skyline of Melbourne and its patterns of land use (Taylor 2001:18). Tall office buildings became an internationally recognised symbol of Melbourne's aspiration for expansion and prosperity (Taylor 2001:58). The scale and modernity of its Melbourne's new buildings reflect the city's belief in its economic and commercial future and the rejection of its small-scale manufacturing and retailing past.

Australia had settled into a new, more independent sense of national pride and identity removed from British antecedents by the mid-1960s. Melbourne had successfully hosted the 1956 Olympic Games, which brought maturity and growth for the city, as well as a role on the international stage, while the introduction of television in the 1950s led to a growing interest and concern for international affairs and global issues.

The physical fabric of Melbourne continued to evolve apace. The sharp rise in car ownership altered the city's layout and appearance through the introduction of multi-level carparks, parking meters and garages, as well as the construction of road infrastructure to provide vehicular access to the city centre. It also influenced the relocation of manufacturing and retailing services outside the city centre (Marsden 2000:41-42).

In 1970, the construction boom showed little signs of slowing down, with the *Age* reporting that:

*the building rate in Melbourne's Golden Mile business area is booming this year and is already a record. The City Council has issued permits for buildings valued at \$107,585,000 – double the value of the previous year record year 1966 and triple last year's permits (Age 15 June 1970:3).*

It was this building boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s that began to turn the tide on wholesale demolition and development and focused people's attention on what was being lost in Melbourne's city centre. As Rodney Davidson, former chair and president of the National Trust in Victoria and founding chair of the Historic Buildings Preservation Council, noted in 1979:

*until about 1971 it was difficult to get people interested in conservation issues. Then suddenly Melbourne woke up one morning and found there was a big hole where the Paris end used to be...it was that more than anything which brought home the consequences of extravagant development (Age 12 April 1979:15).*

This growing concern to preserve elements of Melbourne's past ultimately led to reforms to planning schemes and the establishment of registers to protect historic buildings that continue to exist today.

## **Hoddle Grid Postwar Thematic Environmental History**

The *Hoddle Grid Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975* (the Postwar TEH) has been prepared to document and illustrate how various themes have shaped the environment and culture of central Melbourne following World War II. In this way, the Postwar TEH provides a context for postwar heritage places that have been identified within the Central Business District of the City of Melbourne as part of the *Hoddle Grid Heritage Review* (2020).

This Postwar TEH builds on an earlier version prepared by Context titled *Post-World War Two Thematic History* for the City of Melbourne.

The Hoddle Grid Heritage Review study area extends slightly beyond Robert Hoddle's surveyed grid. The boundary encompasses a section of the Yarra River or Birrarung, recognising that the history of the Hoddle Grid is inextricably linked to the presence of the river and that the grid plan is aligned with its course. In the west, the study area boundary goes to Wurundjeri Way, including the railway and part of the former Batman's Hill, one of several hills that gave the city landscape its particular shape. To the north-east it extends to A'Beckett and Victoria Streets (Context 2018:2).

The Postwar TEH is arranged thematically, with themes consistent with those of the *Thematic History – A History of the City of Melbourne's Urban Environment*, prepared by Context in 2012. The following text provides an explanation for the role of the 2012 Thematic History, and it equally applies to the purpose and function of the Postwar TEH:

The role of the Thematic Environmental History is not to provide a comprehensive account of the social and economic history of the municipality. It is intended to be a concise document that takes a broad-brush approach, setting out the key themes that have influenced the historical development of a municipality and helping to explain how and why the built and human-influenced environments of that municipality look as they do today. A thematic environmental history is an essential part of a municipality heritage study, helping ensure that the places that reflect and represent the historical development of the municipality are recognised.

The Heritage Victoria publication *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes* highlights what is distinctive about Victoria, and offers a guide to the development and use of themes in local thematic environmental histories. Appendix 1 compares the themes developed for this thematic environmental history with the framework of Victoria-wide themes.

This thematic environmental history is arranged around the selected themes, using these themes as chapters. It does not follow an overall chronological order, although within each chapter the narrative may progress in a linear fashion. The process of determining historical themes has been similar to that undertaken for any other thematic municipal history, in that a large amount of secondary material has been drawn on in researching land-use patterns, and economic and social developments. The vast quantity of available literature relating to the history of the City of Melbourne provides a valuable, if somewhat overwhelming, resource; the archives of the City of Melbourne (now housed at PROV) are a significant collection in themselves. It has not been possible to use all of this material to prepare this report, but a selection of the available resources has been drawn on.

Following each sub-theme, the report lists examples of places and objects to help the reader understand the connection between the identified historical themes and the tangible places and objects in the City of Melbourne that relate to each theme. This is an indicative list only, for the purpose of demonstrating the different kinds of places that might relate to the different themes.

No thematic environmental history can ever be considered complete. As more research is undertaken, evidence is uncovered through heritage studies, as community stories are told and as social perspectives change, new aspects of a locality's history will inevitably emerge (Context 2012:vi-vii).

The Postwar TEH is divided into the following historic themes, drawn from the 2012 Thematic History:

- 1.0 Shaping the urban landscape
- 2.0 Governing, administering and policing the city
- 3.0 Building a commercial city
- 4.0 Creating a functioning city
- 5.0 Living in the city
- 6.0 Working in the city
- 7.0 Shaping cultural life
- 8.0 Enjoying the city
- 9.0 Preserving and celebrating the city's history

These themes are discussed more fulsomely below, as they relate to the Melbourne Central Business District in the postwar period (1945-1975).

## Abbreviations

CBD	Central Business District
CDA	City Development Association
CoM	City of Melbourne
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
MCC	Melbourne City Council
MMBW	Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works
NTAV	National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
PROV	Public Record Office Victoria
SLV	State Library of Victoria
VHD	Victorian Heritage Database



# Thematic Environmental History

## 1.0 Shaping the urban landscape

### 1.1 Foundations of town planning in Melbourne's city centre

*The first phase in the centre's postwar history...involved neither development nor redevelopment but an artificially-prolonged period of stasis due to prolonged wartime controls. This was reflected in the mixture of land uses, low-scale and 'pre-modernist' architecture, and the low-key city life...What this means in heritage terms is that much of the prewar city centre, even the colonial city centre, survived intact until the 1960s (Marsden 2000:57).*

Australian interest in town planning, and the concept of national planning in particular, developed significantly after World War II (Marsden 2000:65). At the height of the war, the Commonwealth Government had been concerned with the poor regulations surrounding the development of Australia's capital cities and threatened to withhold vital housing funding for states without appropriate planning legislation. Consequently, the Victorian Government approved the *Town and Country Planning Act 1944*. This Act gave local councils voluntary powers to prepare and administer (either alone or jointly with another council) local planning schemes. Under these schemes, councils could prescribe the use and development of land within their municipality. Importantly, Interim Development Orders (IDOs) were introduced, which acted as stopgap controls until a scheme was approved or amended (Leskovec nd:277-278).

The Town and Country Planning Board was established under the 1944 Act and commenced operation early in 1946. The Board was established to report to and advise the Minister of Public Works on the planning provisions outlined in the Act. These provisions marked the beginning of statutory planning in Victoria (Public Record Office Victoria).

In 1949 the state parliament passed the *Town and Country Planning (Metropolitan Area) Act 1949*. This amendment to the principal 1944 Act gave the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) – a public utility board established in 1891 to provide water supply, sewerage and sewage treatment functions for the City of Melbourne – the power to prepare and administer a planning scheme for a defined metropolitan area in Melbourne. The Town and Country Planning Board's role was to advise on the planning schemes drafted by the MMBW (Leskovec nd:278-279). The metropolitan region would broadly incorporate municipalities within a 15-mile (24km) radius of the central city, with a 25-mile (40km) extension to take in the Frankston area. E F Borrie, the MMBW sewerage engineer, was appointed chief planner.

The *Melbourne Planning Scheme Report* prepared by the MMBW was released in 1954. It was subsequently translated into the new Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme (MMPS) (Lewis et al 1993:216-17). Its development reflected the postwar expectation that the new era would produce modern, efficient, scientifically planned cities (Howe cited in Marsden 2000:65). The MMPS was publicly submitted in 1954 with an IDO put in place in February 1955. Although the MMPS was formally submitted to the State Government in 1958, it took a further 10 years before a planning scheme for metropolitan Melbourne was formally gazetted (Leskovec nd:278).

### 1.2 City of Melbourne's first planning scheme

Initially state and local government treated the Melbourne city centre as a central business zone, with little control placed on the construction of office blocks, warehouses and small factories. Therefore, by the early 1960s, the city represented 'almost a purely market-controlled allocation of space and intensity of site use' (John Paterson Urban Systems, 1972). Any development controls, such as those introduced in Melbourne in the mid-1960s, sought to 'tidy up' rather than influence the pattern of city centre activities (Marsden 2000:64).

On 25 October 1961, Melbourne City Council (MCC) resolved to prepare a specific local planning scheme for Melbourne's central city (Town and Country Planning Board of Victoria 1963/1964:26). The person appointed to prepare the inner-city planning scheme was E F Borrie, the chief planner of the 1954 *Melbourne Planning Scheme Report*.

The MMPS was placed on public exhibition in 1964. It became a properly gazetted scheme in May 1968. The central city was given its own Central Business Zone as part of the MMPS but the metropolitan scheme contained

minimal information about how it was to be administered. This responsibility was left to the MCC (Ramsay Consulting for DELWP c2016:8).

### 1.3 Plot ratios and development outcomes

E F Borrie's 1964 planning report for central Melbourne drew attention to land use control and zoning, and recommended the implementation of Plot Ratios (Figure 2) (Ramsay Consulting 2012:7-8). The Plot Ratio, or Floor Area Ratio, is the relationship between the total amount of usable floor area that a building has and the total area of the lot on which the building stands. The ratio is determined by dividing the total or gross floor area of the building by the gross area of the lot. A higher ratio is more likely to indicate a denser construction with higher buildings. In 1964, the recommended highest Plot Ratio was 8.1:1 at the corner of William and Collins streets. The lowest recommended Plot Ratio was 1:1 on Elizabeth Street adjacent to the Queen Victoria Market, and at the north end of King Street adjacent to Flagstaff Gardens. Most blocks were set at below 5:1, meaning that for a building that covered the whole site, five storeys would be the maximum height.

The impact of Plot Ratio controls was the consolidation of the traditional city fabric into larger allotments, particularly clustered in the east, and the western hill of Bourke and Collins streets. Base level Plot Ratios were allocated to districts and a bonus system was introduced which allowed for increased floor areas in exchange for open residual (civic) space at ground level, such as plazas and common areas. Specific uses such as 'international standard hotels' could also achieve bonuses (City of Melbourne 2016:5-7). The 'slab' towers of the earlier 1960s with the lift and services core on the property boundary, gave way to the taller and more efficient freestanding towers with a central cores and high efficiency floor plates of up to 2,000 square metres, set back from street frontages via a forecourt, plaza or podium (CoM 2004).



Figure 2. Plot ratios from the 1964 planning report for central Melbourne (Ramsay Consulting 2012:22)

### 1.4 Site consolidation

In the early 1960s, offices comprised more than 40 per cent of Melbourne city addresses (Davison cited in Marsden 2000:58). From the late 1960s, skyscrapers also consumed more land as buildings became taller and wider. Adjacent city properties were purchased and amalgamated to form large redevelopment sites. The creation of these large scale 'superblocks' relied on demolition. Historian, Susan Marsden, writes that by 'combining long-established plots and closing streets the procedure threatened to obliterate street and block patterns dating from the foundation years of the capital cities' (Marsden 2000:60-61).

As a consequence, Melbourne's skyline, its ground level spatial configuration and the 'colourful mix of forms and functions in the nineteenth-century town' (Davison cited in Marsden 2000:57) were 'radically transformed' between 1956 and 1975 (Marsden 2000:57):

*These changes were ascribed to postwar prosperity, to architects' discovery of the International style, and to property and mining booms as well as rising land values. The change was most pronounced at the heart of the financial district near Collins Street where land values soared. As land taxes were tied to the unimproved capital value redevelopment was inevitable. The old urban mix 'gave way to the high-rise uniformity of the corporate bureaucracies in the 1960s' (Dunstan cited in Marsden 2000:58).*

In this period, most of Australia's largest companies, including Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP), Royal Dutch Shell (Shell), Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), General Motors Holden (GMH), Ansett and their accompanying financiers were established within city centres (Marsden 2000:58). The Conzinc Rio-Tinto building (now demolished) replaced Melbourne Mansions at 89-101 Collins Street in 1963 (Figure 3). Architectural historian, Miles Lewis AM, notes that this curtain walled office building, set back from Collins Street to provide a north facing garden entry, was one of the first high-rise developments to break the building line of Collins Street and set the precedent for providing open space at the ground level of buildings as a 'quid pro quo for various dispensations offered to developers' (Lewis et al 1993:262).



Figure 3. Conzinc-Rio Tinto Building at 95 Collins Street, 1970 (State Library of Victoria, H2011.55/1479)

### 1.5 Abandoning height controls and building higher

During World War II and up to 1953 there was little building activity in Australian city centres. Wartime austerity severely restricted the availability of materials for building, and costs were high. With the various state governments lifting constraints on building materials after 1952, development resumed (Jennifer Taylor 2001:15). As reported in University of Melbourne's Architectural Department's publication *Cross-Section* in 1954:

*All over Australia urban building is lazily awakening. The scene in Melbourne city, which only last year seemed condemned to building inactivity forever, has quite suddenly changed. After 14 years almost without a new building, many major works are now actually under way and several more are in advanced planning (Cross-Section 1954: No 18, Figure 4).*

The following year it was reported that 'Sydney and Melb[ourne] cities' booms reached the stage where each street seemed to have some bldg.(sic) activity' (*Cross-Section* 1955: No 33).

Commercial expansion in central Melbourne had been hindered by a 132 foot (40 metre) height limit that had been enforced since 1916. Many office buildings built precisely to this height limit had been erected in the interwar period, and this continued after the war with the completion of the first postwar example, the new premises for petroleum giant H C Sleigh Ltd at 166-172 Queen Street (Bates, Smart & McCutcheon) in 1953. While some other buildings followed, it was not until the height limit was lifted in 1956 that commercial development in the city boomed. As was later recorded in *Architecture Australia*, no fewer than 30 new multi-storey office buildings were built in and around the city centre between 1955 and 1958 (Heritage Alliance 2008:19-20).

The first city building to exceed the 132 feet limit was the 20-storey (81 metre) ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1958), located just outside the Hoddle Grid (Figure 5). It was followed by the 26-storey (96 metre) Conzinc Rio-Tinto building at 95 Collins Street (Bernard Evans, 1962, demolished), which retained the title of Melbourne's tallest building until the end of the decade. By then, high-rise development was becoming common, and it was reported in 1973 that buildings of 20 or more storeys were appearing in central Melbourne at a rate of approximately one per year. The title of Melbourne's tallest building changed frequently in the following decades: from Marland House 570 Bourke Street (1971, 121 metres), to BHP House at 140 William Street (1972, 152 metres) to the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-75, 153 metres) (Heritage Alliance 2008:20).

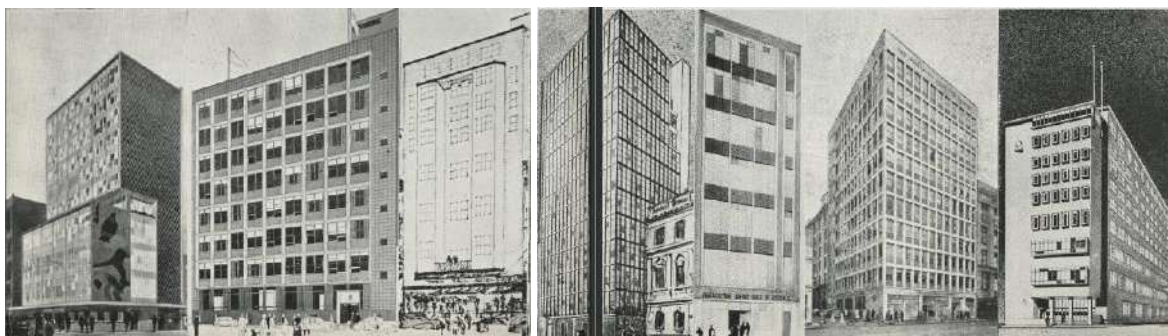


Figure 4. Sketches showing high-rise buildings being constructed in the City of Melbourne, 1954 (*Cross-Section* April 1954, No 18)





Figure 5. Lonsdale Street showing ICI building, Melbourne, Vic. Rose Stereograph Co, 1955 (State Library of Victoria)

### 1.6 Campaigning for a better Melbourne

In November 1953, an activist group, the City Development Association (CDA), was founded to counteract the perceived stagnation of development in central Melbourne in the post-World War II era. As reported in the *Age* at the time, 'for too long Melbourne has been standing still. The time has come for her to reassert herself and to show that the citizens of this generation...can plan and build just as well as their fathers and grandfathers did in making this a truly great city' (*Age* 18 November 1953:2). The CDA included an array of businessmen and professionals in the fields of architecture, planning and academia. Sir Norman Myer of the Myer Emporium was appointed the CDA's first chairman.

Pledging to 'campaign for the necessary action that will relieve or solve many of the worst problems that have overtaken the city and metropolitan area in the last 20 years,' the CDA advocated for such things as civic improvement, slum redevelopment, traffic and parking in the central city, high-rise office towers, and high-density living (*Age* 18 November 1953:2). CDA initiatives included the founding of Moomba, the promotion of 'the Paris End' of Collins Street, the beautification of Flinders Street near the railway station and the development of off-street parking (*Age*, 17 June 1960:6; Dunstan 2008). The CDA was almost disbanded in November 1965 due to lack of funds and despite attempts to revive it, appears to have languished soon after (*Age* 16 November 1965:12; *Age* 30 November 1965:12).

### 1.7 Diversifying the city centre

In the 1970s, the office zone expanded upwards and outwards to encroach on the old wholesaling, light industrial and professional districts (Marsden 2000:58). MCC developed the *City of Melbourne Strategy Plan* in 1974 which focused on the city's overall accessibility (to be improved by the underground rail loop), office employment, government activity, entertainment and character. It also projected a large increase in employment and a moderate increase in housing.

For the central city the Strategy Plan encouraged high-density office development, especially in the vicinity of the proposed underground city railway stations. The central city was divided into three precincts of office, retail and entertainment with Plot Ratio maximums of 10:1, 8:1 and 6:1 respectively and bonuses of up to 2:1 in each. It also recommended the application of 'View Protection Policies' along the western, southern and part of the eastern edges of the Hoddle Grid to preserve views into and out of the central city (Ramsay Consulting 2012:8-10).

Unfortunately, the MCC was contending with weak finances and years of chaotic administration at the time of developing the 1974 Strategy Plan and its implementation consequently failed. Even so, this first attempt to revitalise Melbourne caused an "awakening of public awareness" of the need for urban reform. This led to a successfully implemented Strategy Plan in 1985 (Figaredo 2019).



## 1.8 Expressing an architectural style

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as ‘essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building’ and is one of the ‘leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas’ (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled ‘glass box’ aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

## 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### 1.10 Brutalism and brickwork

Brutalism was another architectural style that emerged in commercial building design in Australia as early as 1959, when Harry Seidler used off-form concrete for an eight-storey office block in Ultimo, NSW. That same year, Melbourne architect Kevin Knight (from the office of Oakley & Parkes) prepared plans for the International Order of Oddfellows (IOOF) Building at 380 Russell Street, Melbourne that broke new ground with its banded façade of reinforced concrete spandrels.

Based on the work of modern architecture pioneer Le Corbusier, and largely inspired by his design for the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseilles (1952), this architectural style became widely accepted internationally. Brutalism incorporated ideas of integrity in expression of materials (especially off-form concrete), structure and function, and often gave rise to dramatic sculptural forms (VHD Hoyts Cinema Centre).

Brutalism became more widespread in central Melbourne in the 1970s. The Mid City Centre at 194-200 Bourke Street (Bogle & Banfield, 1969-70), is a notable example, with its façade of chamfered concrete volumes.

During the 1960s and 70s, face brickwork also made a return with the Houston Building at 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1964-65), the State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton & Lobb, 1967-68) and the 13-storey Nubrik House at 269-275 William Street by architects Buchan, Laird & Buchan (1972) (NTAV 2014:22).

### 1.11 Overseas influences

America was the strongest overseas influence on the post-World War II architecture of Australian capitals. Australian architects often studied in American universities or visited the USA on study tours. American advances in the manufacturing of steel and concrete were also adopted in Australia. While steel was the main material in North American skyscrapers, concrete was used more often in Australia, and often combined with high-strength steel (Marsden 2000:70-72).

Another influence on architectural design was émigré architects who arrived in Melbourne before and after World War II. The impact of postwar immigration on Australian cities can be described in three ways: the enlivening of city centres by the arrival of European and Asian immigrants into mainly Australian-born communities; the rapid increase in the size of capital cities; and the roles played by particular immigrant groups, especially in the fields of architecture, economics, politics and cultural activities (Marsden 2000:95-99). Architect Kurt Popper, who arrived in Melbourne from Vienna in 1940, developers Bruno and Rino Grollo (sons of an Italian immigrant), and Viennese immigrant Ted Lustig and his Israeli son-in-law Max Moar, have had a significant impact on Melbourne's city landscape through architecture and property development.

Émigré architects were often educated in progressive institutions where modernism was more advanced than in Australia. Their expertise and modernist designs gained recognition and were translated into the local context. Many were also involved with teaching at architectural schools and influenced the next generation of architects (Lozanovska & McKnight 2015:352-353). Examples in the city centre include the apartment buildings, Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970), both designed by Kurt Popper.

1.0 Shaping the urban landscape	
Sub-themes	Examples
Abandoning height controls and building higher	Marland House, 570 Bourke Street (1971) BHP House, 140 William Street (1972) Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-75)

1.0 Shaping the urban landscape	
Sub-themes	Examples
Expressing an architectural style	Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (1954) Coates House, 18-20 Collins Street (1957)
Beyond the curtain wall	Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61) Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (1968-70) Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street (1961-63) Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73 State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street (1967-68) Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975)
Brutalism and brickwork	Mid City, 194-200 Bourke Street (1969-70) Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (1964-65) State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68) Nubrik House, 269-275 William Street (1972) Total House, 170-190 Russell Street (1966) Hoyts Cinema Centre, 140 Bourke Street (1966-69)
Overseas influences	Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) 13-15 Collins Street (1970) AMP Tower & St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (1965-69)

## 2.0 Governing, administering and policing the city

Public administration related to the government provision of services to Australian cities and states has always been based in capital cities. Government departments increased steadily from the late nineteenth century and continued to be of major importance after World War II (Marsden 2000:82). Architect Miles Lewis argues that public works buildings before 1945 comprised ‘restrained and sober metropolitan architecture’, whereas after the war, government institutions sought to construct buildings that embodied images of modernity and progress. E F Borrie’s 1954 plan for Melbourne, for example, proposed a new layout of major public buildings around Parliament House (Lewis et al 1993:221).

In the postwar period, the number of government offices increased dramatically in city centres due to two phenomena: an expansion in Commonwealth revenue and powers, and the extension of state government responsibilities to include welfare, housing, education, culture, and public transport services (Marsden 2000:83).

### 2.1 Commonwealth government

In 1948, the Commonwealth Government compulsorily acquired land on either side of Little Lonsdale Street, between Spring and Exhibition streets. The Commonwealth Centre (now demolished) was subsequently constructed on this block of land (with a street address of 11-39 La Trobe Street) over the period 1958 to the early 1960s. Its construction transformed ‘the image of the Federal government in central Melbourne into that of a modern corporation’ (Lewis et al 1993:223-24, 255).

As Commonwealth powers increased after World War II, Commonwealth buildings in city centres rose in number. Of particular influence was the transfer in 1942 of income tax revenue from the states to the Commonwealth and the resultant construction of buildings for the Taxation Office, including a building in Bourke Street, which opened in 1958. Marsden writes that the Commonwealth government presence, including the establishment after the war of the new Department of Housing and Construction, reinforced Melbourne’s continuing pre-eminence as Australia’s financial centre, at least until the 1960s.

A telephone exchange and postal hall building was constructed by the Commonwealth government at 114-120 Russell Street in the period 1948-54. In 1956 the building served as a relay station for the broadcasting of newly arrived television. In 1959, the Commonwealth Arbitration Courts opened at 450 Little Bourke Street, and in 1965 the Reserve Bank of Australia opened at 56-64 Collins Street. Telephone exchanges were also constructed by the Commonwealth Department of Works at 376-382 Flinders Lane (opened in 1957) and at 447-453 Lonsdale Street (1969).

### 2.2 State government

Historically state governments have aimed to increase local economic activity by promoting investment in their respective capital city. In the 1960s, state government policy required or encouraged interstate developers and engineering firms to set up subsidiary operations in their own states. In addition, both state and local governments have played a role in the provision of infrastructure for ports, railways, streets, freeways, and underground services, resulting in a concentration of government headquarters in the city centre (Marsden 2000:84-85, 88). However, increasingly, state and federal governments have adopted policies of privatisation, withdrawing from direct provision of infrastructure and services such as telecommunications.

In the 1960s the Treasury Reserve, lying just outside the Hoddle Grid, was transformed by the construction of the Victorian State Offices at 1 Treasury Place and 1 Macarthur Street. An architectural competition was held in 1962 for an office tower to be placed behind the Old Treasury Building. Barry Patten of Yuncken Freeman won the competition with a design for two buildings; a low-scale building directly behind the Old Treasury Building (1 Treasury Place), and a taller tower to the north of matching design (1 Macarthur Street). A third building, to house the State Chemical Laboratories, was constructed to the east of the tower at the same time in the late 1960s. Completed by 1970, the buildings were designed in a modern style and transformed the nineteenth century precinct into a modern, multi-functional complex (VHD Treasury Reserve Precinct).

2.0 Governing, administering and policing the city	
Sub-themes	Examples
Commonwealth government	Telephone Exchange and Post Office, 114-120 Russell Street (1954) Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376-382 Flinders Lane (1957) Commonwealth Arbitration Courts, Little Bourke Street (1959) Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (1964-66) Lonsdale Exchange Building, 447-453 Lonsdale Street (1969) Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (1975)
State government	Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works Head Office, 613-639 Little Collins Street (1973) State Savings Bank, 264 Little Bourke Street (1961)



### 3.0 Building a commercial city

#### 3.1 Manufacturing

From the 1960s, many factories relocated from Melbourne's city centre to the suburbs, although some manufacturing remained until the late 1970s, mainly in the fields of clothing, printing and food processing (Marsden 2000:99). The textile industry was an important sector of central Melbourne's economy, however in Flinders Lane and Flinders Street, crowding and a lack of parking forced this industry into decline from the 1960s (May 2008a). Wilder House, built in 1956 at 41-45 A'Beckett Street, is an example of a purpose-built textile factory from this period.

#### 3.2 Business and finance

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the *Banking Act 1947*, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (*City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974* in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

#### 3.3 Retail decline and revitalisation in the city centre

Central Melbourne and Central Sydney accounted for approximately one third of Australian metropolitan retail sales in the 1950s. However, the 1950s saw city retailers increasingly struggle to attract consumers from the suburbs, largely due to the increase in car ownership in the postwar period. To counteract this, in 1953 Myer Ltd erected the first multi-storey carpark to be built since World War II in Lonsdale Street. Another carpark, the Grand Central Carpark, opened in Bourke Street soon afterwards (Heritage Alliance 2008:16).

Suburban development and the construction of suburban shopping complexes such as Chadstone Shopping Centre also had a major impact on Melbourne's city centre into the 1960s with traditional businesses including shops, manufacturing and professional services moving to new suburban locations (Spearritt cited in Marsden 2000:49). Several city department stores closed and were demolished or converted to other uses. The Eastern Market (located at the corner of Bourke and Exhibition streets) was demolished in 1960 to make way for the Southern Cross Hotel (now demolished) (Marsden 2000:49).

Some inner-city retailing persisted in this period with Allans and Co opening a new music store at 276-278 Collins Street in 1957 and Myer constructing the Department Aerial Crossover, a four-storey pedestrian bridge over Little Bourke Street designed by longtime Myer architects Tompkins, Shaw and Evans (1963) (Lewis et al 1993:264).

Alliances between government ministers, councillors and traders sought to halt the decline of retail in the Melbourne city centre. Two main strategies emerged: to expedite car access and, from the 1970s, to encourage pedestrians through, for example, the creation of car-free malls, Sunday trading, and the establishment of open-air markets (Marsden 2000:51-52).

In an effort to revive the city's waning retail economy, a trial closure of Bourke Street between Swanston and Elizabeth streets was introduced in late 1973. This followed discussions between MCC and the Retail Trader's Association. The trial resulted in protests from shop keepers and caused traffic chaos (May 2008c). The 1974 Strategy Plan pursued the concept, encouraging 'the maintenance and growth of the retail areas as the major centre for shopping for the metropolitan area' (City of Melbourne 1974:267), but it was February 1978 before the section was formally closed to through traffic. Policies within the Strategy Plan also aimed to counteract:

*present economic market forces that would force entertainment and retail activities out of the CBD.  
The mandatory requirements for retail or entertainment floor space will ensure that the variety provided by shops, restaurants or cinemas is maintained (Interplan for CoM 1974:267).*

3.0 Building a commercial city	
Sub-themes	Examples
Business and finance	London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (1960) Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (1957) Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61) AMP Tower and St James Building, 527-555 Bourke Street (1965-69) MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (c1970-73) BHP House, 140 William Street (1973) AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (1956-58) State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68) Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73) State Savings Bank, 264 Little Bourke Street (229 Swanston Street) (1961) Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (1964-66) Stock Exchange House, 351-357 Collins Street (1968)
Retail decline and revitalisation	Total House, 170-190 Russell Street (1966) Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (1956-57) Myer Department Aerial Crossover, Little Bourke Street (1963) Bourke Street Mall (pedestrianised 1978)

## 4.0 Creating a functioning city

### 4.1 Planning for cars

*In the 1940s and 1950s public transport was still a major contributor to the city's transport needs...[However] motoring interests argued they deserved government support because they took pressure off an overstrained public transport system...By the 1970s...public transport was...justified mainly as a subsidiary service for city-bound commuters and the carless minority of children, women and old people (Davison 2004:128-29).*

Suburbanisation and car ownership increased significantly after World War II and 'city expansion, freed from the restraints of fixed-rail transport, began to accelerate' (Howe, Nichols & Davison 2014:1). In 1911, the Melbourne metropolitan area, around 67,340 hectares, lay within a 16-kilometre radius of the General Post Office; this steadily increased to 80,290 hectares by 1947, and to 210,308 hectares by 1961 (Pryor cited in Marsden 2000:61). In the decade 1947-57 alone, the number of vehicles on Melbourne's roads doubled (Lewis et al 1993:219).

This increase in car ownership and use brought a host of requirements for the city, including freeway access, on-street parking, parking stations (whether above or below ground), premises to sell cars and workshops to repair them. The requirements of cars also influenced the relocation of industry, and the outward expansion and decentralisation of the city (Rymer 2018).

Melbourne was transformed from a public transport-oriented and pedestrian-friendly place into a place where 'the car had taken over the streets' (Marsden 2000:41-42). Traffic signals, road signs and parking meters proliferated, with parking meters first installed in the City of Melbourne in 1955. As a consequence, retailing declined, and much public spending focused on the construction of infrastructure for cars, such as freeways, bridges, car parks, petrol stations, and road widening (Marsden 2000:41-42), including the widening of Elizabeth Street and Kings Way in the 1960s.

In the postwar period the provision of off-street parking became essential to the economic well-being and growth of the city centre and the wider city area. Many at-grade off-street parking spaces were located on sites where buildings had been demolished, however the increasing number of cars led to a recommendation from the City Development Association in 1955 that more off-street parking be provided. Nine car parking stations were recommended, one for each city block. Total House, 170-190 Russell Street, was one such building (Figure 6). The site for the car park was purchased in 1959-61 by the City of Melbourne and tenders were advertised in 1962. The complex, which combined a multi-level car park, offices and a theatre, was designed by architects Bogle Banfield and Associates and opened in 1965 (VHD Total House).



Figure 6. Total House at the corner of Russell and Little Bourke Street, 1966 (State Library of Victoria H91.244/5423)

## 4.2 Planning for public transport

Despite the growth in road transport and car ownership in the postwar period, tram, rail and bus routes established in earlier years continued to direct traffic into city centres. The Melbourne Metropolitan Transport Committee released the Melbourne Transportation Plan in 1969 that recommended the construction of 510 kilometres of freeways, 64 kilometres of arterial roads, three new railway lines, railway extensions, and an underground railway loop (Lewis et al 1993:250).

An underground railway loop had been proposed for Melbourne as early as 1926 as a solution to ease congestion in the city centre, with a former engineer of the railways commenting that other major cities had dealt with their commuter congestion problems by going underground ‘... Melbourne, owing to its undulating contours, was well adapted for such railways’ (*Argus* 17 June 1926:14). Discussions ensued in the following decades until the Victorian Parliament passed the *City of Melbourne Underground Railway Construction Act* in 1960. This Act enabled the construction of a proposed loop, however due to financial constraints, it was a further 10 years before the project commenced.

The project involved the construction of four tunnels running almost the entire length of La Trobe and Spring streets, and three new underground stations: Flagstaff, Museum (later renamed Melbourne Central) and Parliament (Figure 7). Tunnelling works began in 1971 and a tunnel boring machine, nicknamed The Mole, was brought into operation in 1972 to complete the first phase of the loop (Follington 2018). The loop was progressively brought into service from 1981 with the opening of Museum, followed by Parliament Station in 1983 and Flagstaff in 1985 (Carroll 2008).

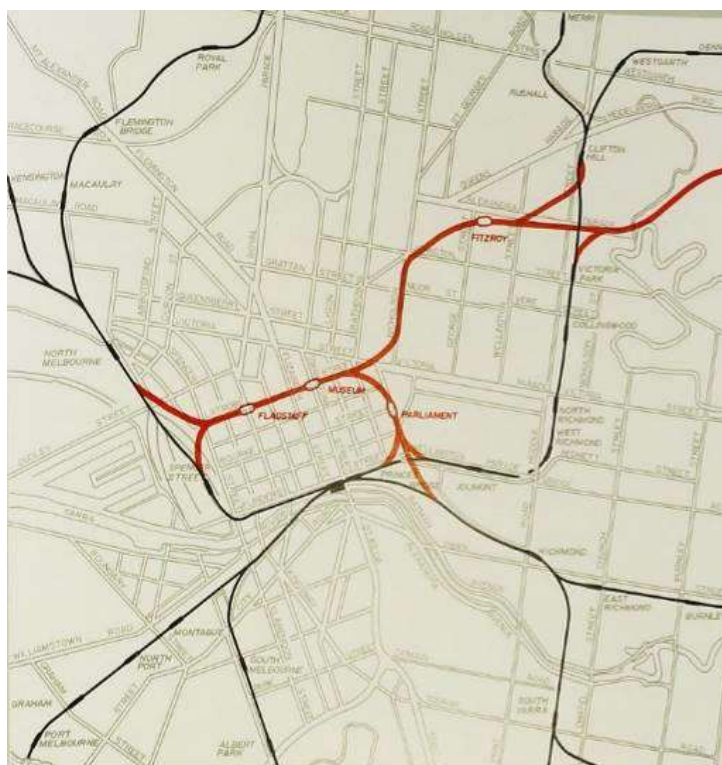


Figure 7. Proposed Underground Rail Loop station locations included in the Melbourne Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 1969 (Public Record Office Victoria).

## 4.3 Providing health and welfare services

Health, welfare and education services were historically established in Melbourne's city centre. The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street (1972-73) was one of many charities established as part of the Catholic Church's official missionary work to provide pastoral care, services and support for seafarers.

The Pharmaceutical Guild, established in Victoria in 1928 to ensure the quality of medicines and to establish a uniform scale of wages for pharmaceutical assistants, constructed a building at 18-22 Francis Street in 1954 to a

design by Cowper, Murphy and Appleford. Optometrists, Coles and Garrard, established an office building and consulting rooms at 376 Bourke Street in 1957 to a design by architects Meldrum and Noad.

The Queen Victoria Hospital, established in La Trobe Street in 1896 as the first women's hospital in Victoria, moved to 210 Lonsdale Street in 1946. Its primary aim was to be a hospital 'For Women, By Women'. By 1965 it became the new Monash University's teaching hospital for gynaecology, obstetrics and paediatrics and changed from treating solely female patients to being a 'family hospital'. Renamed the Queen Victoria Medical Centre in 1977, it relocated to the Monash Medical Centre at Clayton in 1989 (Russell 2008).

<b>4.0 Creating a functioning city</b>	
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Planning for cars	Total House, 170-190 Russell Street (1965)
Planning for public transport	Degraves Street Subway Flinders Street (1956) City Loop Underground Railway (1971-85)
Providing health and welfare services	Pharmaceutical Guild Building, 18-22 St Francis Street (1954) Coles and Garrard Building, 376 Bourke Street (1957) Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre, 488-500 Little Collins Street (1972-73) Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67)

## 5.0 Living in the city centre

### 5.1 Housing and lodging

The provision of accommodation has always been a major function of Australian city centres, and has included the establishment of hotels, hostels, boarding houses and serviced apartments, as well as terraces, flats and medium-density housing. Since the 1950s, the market sought by inner-city developers has moved to an almost exclusively middle- to higher-income group. New forms of accommodation from the 1950s replaced older buildings with high-cost, high-rise buildings for a restricted range of users (Marsden 2000:53).

The postwar era saw the introduction of apartments and flats in the well-established inner suburbs of South Yarra and St Kilda, spreading to Caulfield, Malvern, Camberwell, Hawthorn and Prahran. Victoria's first block of 'own-your-own' or 'OYO' flats were built in Hawthorn in 1949 and the subsequent introduction of strata title legislation by architect and Lord Mayor Bernard Evans led to the proliferation of this housing type from the early 1950s (Heritage Alliance 2008:23).

The apartment boom reached the inner city in the late 1960s, facilitated by the *Conveyancing (Strata Titles) Act* of 1961. An Australian innovation, the legislation allowed each lot or apartment to have its own title deed (Stent 2018). Many émigré architects, who were experienced in higher density living in Europe, specialised in apartment design. Viennese-born architect Kurt Popper, for example, built two blocks of residential flats in central Melbourne – Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970) (Heritage Alliance 2008:21).

Although marketed as a glamorous and convenient lifestyle, high-rise city apartment living was not popularly embraced. Exhibition Towers, an 11-storey residential building located at the north-west corner of Exhibition Street and Little Lonsdale Street, was designed and built as a residential and commercial building. Constructed in 1968-69 to a design by Kenneth McDonald & Associates, the building was an endeavour to provide 'OYO' flats in the city centre. 'High prices, high bills and Melbourne's conservative living style' contributed to difficulties in finding buyers for the units and the building was converted to the Courtesy Inn Motel in 1971 (*Age* 17 February 1971:3). It was also reported in 1971 that Park Tower was using its tenants' car spaces as a public car park and the flats were being let on short-term leases. Similarly, the two-month-old 13-15 Collins Street apartments contemplated filling its lower four floors with shops, offices and medical practices (*Age* 17 February 1971:3, Figure 8).

In 1974, the MCC introduced a policy to encourage residents back to the city through the construction of a variety of residential typologies. However, because development was market driven, it was predominantly offices and retail spaces that were constructed in the city centre (Marsden 2000:54, 112).



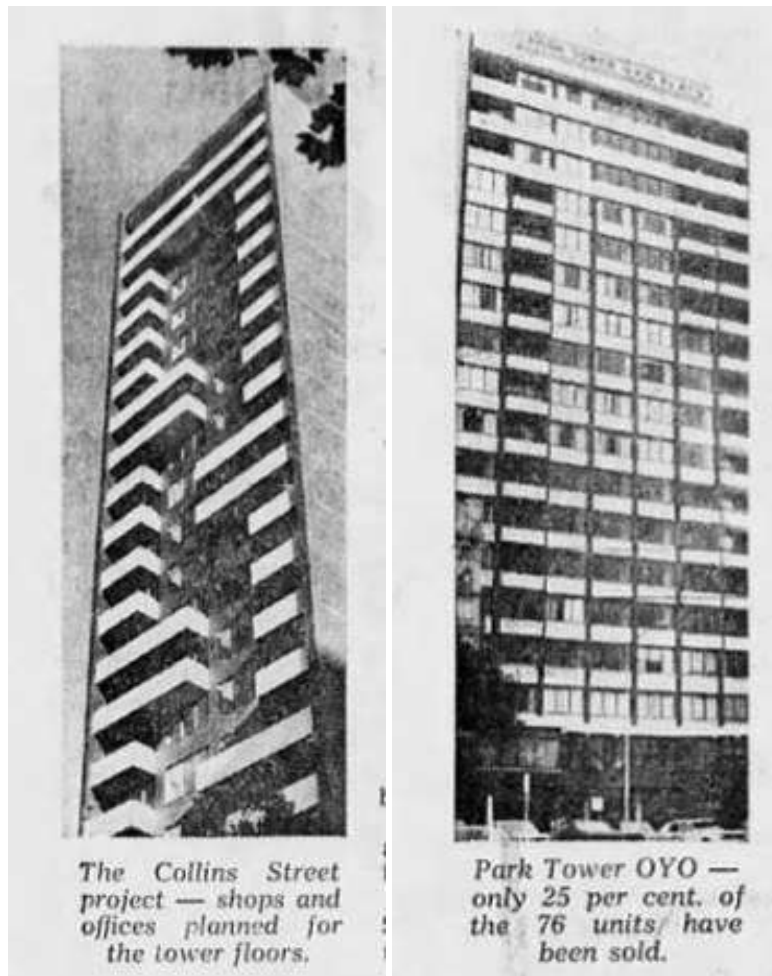


Figure 8. Plans for city apartments reconsidered due to lack of interest, 1971 (Age 17 February 1971:3)

## 5.2 Hotels

The lack of hotel accommodation was a cause for concern in central Melbourne in the 1950s and 1960s. In the lead up to the 1956 Olympic Games, it was reported that the city's hotel accommodation was not only far below international standards, but did not provide enough beds to host large numbers of tourists. Up until that time, hotels primarily focused on the provision of food and drink; there was no legal requirement to provide accommodation. To boost the number of hotel beds in the lead up to the 1956 Games, amended liquor laws were introduced that made it essential for every hotel to offer lodgings. This new law contributed to the closure and demolition of an unprecedented number of city hotels in the postwar period. Between 1951 and 1961, 23 hotels in central Melbourne closed, with only five top city hotels from Melbourne's bygone era – Scott's, Menzies', the Oriental, the Windsor and the Federal – remaining. Within a decade, all but one (the Windsor) had been demolished (Annear 2005:193).

Despite a push to provide more hotels with higher standards in time for the Olympic Games, ultimately only a handful were constructed. Hosie's Hotel (1954-56) at the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders streets, was one of the first modern hotels to be built in central Melbourne (NTAV 2014:42).

The 1960s saw the opening of Australia's first high-rise, American-style hotel. With the increasing use of faster jet planes, international travel for both luxury and business purposes became a glamorous pursuit. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, US-based hotels such as the Hilton and the Pan Am-owned Intercontinental began establishing the first international hotel chains.

The Southern Cross Hotel (now demolished) opened in 1962 as Australia's first modern hotel of the jet age – a sign that the city had established itself as an international destination (Annear 2005:186). It occupied a large site on Bourke Street in central Melbourne, formerly occupied by the grand Eastern Market. The hotel, owned by Pan American Airways, set the new standard for city hotels in Melbourne and its central plaza, shopping arcades, and ten-pin bowling alley represented a new concept of public space (Goald). The Southern Cross Hotel remained Melbourne's premier hotel into the early 1980s, famously hosting The Beatles during their 1964 tour and national

events such as the Logies and the Brownlow (Brown-May 2005). The Bryson Centre (now Rydges Hotel), 174-192 Exhibition Street (1970-72), was one of a number of high-rise buildings planned for the eastern end of the city in the early 1970s to 'meet the tourist boom expected with the opening of the new airport at Tullamarine' (*Age* 1970:2). The 23-storey Bryson Centre incorporated office space, a 600-seat cinema, restaurants, convention centres and a 292-room hotel, named Hotel Melbourne, which was located on the upper 13 floors of the building. The Bryson Centre was described by the *Age* as a 'city within a city – every need is either within the hotel walls or within walking distance outside' (*Age* 1972:19).

5.0 Living in the city centre	
Sub-themes	Examples
Housing and lodging	Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) 13-15 Collins Street (1970) Treasury Gate, 99-101 Spring Street (1971) Exhibition Towers, 287-293 Exhibition Street (1969-71)
Hotels	Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street (1954-56) The Bryson Centre (now Rydges Hotel), 174-192 Exhibition Street (1970-72)

## **6.0 Working in the city**

### **6.1 Working life**

After World War II, Melbourne's economy gradually recovered and the city consolidated its role as the financial capital of Australia. Banking and stock-broking industries and the associated workforce grew apace and the city's working population occupied the growing number of new city offices.

The number and size of Melbourne's legal firms evolved in line with the city's population and strong economy, and was most heavily concentrated around William Street and the Supreme Court buildings on Lonsdale Street.

Those working in the medical field were mostly based either at the east end of Collins Street, where a large number of private consultants, hospitals and small clinics were located, or in the Carlton / Parkville area where several large public hospitals were established.

Conversely, the number of factories operating in central Melbourne had declined by the middle of the twentieth century. While Flinders Lane remained an important wholesale area for fashion and textiles in the second half of the twentieth century, clothing manufacturing declined. The north-west area of the city remained an area for light industrial and mechanical workshops and there was small-scale manufacturing north and west of Lonsdale Street (Context 2012:72).

## 7.0 Shaping cultural life

### 7.1 Arts and creative life in the city

The Melbourne city centre contains numerous important cultural sites, such as libraries, museums, theatres, art centres, lecture halls, workshops and institutes, and also provides many less formal exhibition and performance spaces.

In the art world, the war years saw an unprecedented growth in the creation of, and interest in, local art, as well as a palpable shift in subject matter away from idyllic pastoral and domestic scenes to social commentaries on life in postwar Melbourne. One of the most enduring and celebrated images of twentieth century Melbourne is John Brack's *Collins Street, 5pm* (1955), which paints a portrait of the monotonous nature of Melbourne's peak hour (Context 2012:75).

The growing interest in local art was supplemented by small-scale, simple exhibition spaces such as Tye's Gallery, a large basement space at the rear of a furniture store in Bourke Street, which was founded in 1945. Artists generally managed their own exhibitions within this space. The establishment of the Stanley Coe Gallery in Bourke Street in 1950 saw the emergence of managed exhibitions of contemporary local art. In 1953 French émigrés Georges and Mirka Mora established Mirka's Gallery in Collins Street, while John Reed established the Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1956. This became the short-lived Museum of Modern Art and Design of Australia in 1958, which utilised exhibiting space at Ball & Welch Department Store in Flinders Street where artist, Arthur Boyd, first showed his 'Bride' series (Galbally 2008).

By the late 1950s contemporary Australian art was becoming highly marketable and a rush of new commercial galleries were established. These were generally established outside the city centre in suburbs including South Yarra, St Kilda and Collingwood (Galbally 2008). The establishment of these galleries away from the city centre was countered by the creation of a permanent, purpose-built building for the National Gallery of Victoria's art collection. The NGV International building, located on St Kilda Road, was designed by architect Sir Roy Grounds and opened to the public in 1968.

Another major Melbourne institution, the State Library of Victoria, was extended in 1961 with the construction of the La Trobe Library (Figure 9 and 10). The aim was to resolve the issue of disunity and gain some coherence and distinction along the north boundary of the city block. The works were completed in 1965 (Lovell Chen 2011:100).

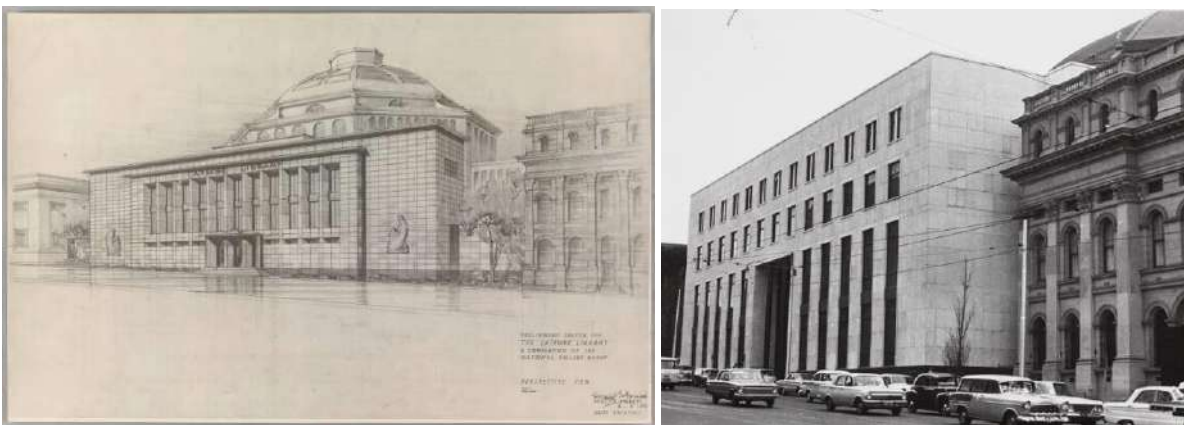


Figure 9 and 10. Preliminary sketch of the proposed La Trobe Library, 1950 and the completed design, 1964 (State Library of Victoria H28187 and H30064)

### 7.2 Belonging to an ethnic or cultural group

The mass immigration of Europeans during the postwar period led Melbourne to become one of the most multi-cultural cities in the world. Italians and Greeks settled in large numbers within the municipality, where they occupied run-down Victorian workers' cottages, and rejuvenated them, often in a Mediterranean style, and established cafes and other places of business (Context 2012).

Melbourne's cosmopolitan café society was established by European migrants, particularly Italians, after World War II. Well-known cafés that opened in the city centre in the 1950s included Pellegrini's at 66 Bourke Street,

Mario's café in Little Bourke Street, the sidewalk café operated by the Oriental Hotel at 17 Collins Street and Mirka's Café at the corner of Exhibition and Little Bourke Streets (Hanscombe 2009). In 1975, it was reported that Melbourne had become the third largest Greek-speaking city in the world and Lonsdale Street became the focus of Greek cafes and other businesses (Lewis et al 1993:239).

Chinese immigrants and investors from South-East Asia have been responsible for the renewal of historical Chinatowns in Australia and in the 1960s new Chinese immigrants helped to revive Melbourne's own Chinatown. Assisted by the City Development Association, a Chinatown Development Association was established and a proposal tabled to decorate Little Bourke Street with lanterns, banners and Chinese murals on shop fronts (*Age* 9 July 1959:12). Meanwhile, the See Yup Society – a society for Chinese citizens – opened a new building in Little Bourke Street in 1965, which provided shops and accommodation for Chinese classes, dances and clan meetings (*Age* 30 April 1966:5).

### 7.3 Protests and activism

Following the commencement of the Vietnam War in 1955, the Australian Government pledged its support to the United States. In 1965 it sent conscripted young men into overseas service, and subsequently instigated the greatest social and political dissent in Australia since the conscription referendums of World War I ([Australian War Memorial](#)). The Women's Liberation Movement also gained momentum during this period.

The 1960s and 1970s were rife with protest. Within central Melbourne, significant events included the Vietnam moratoria organised by Jim Cairns of the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign in 1970, when more than 70,000 people marched through the city of Melbourne to protest against Australia's participation in the war (Marsden 2000:107). Melbourne was also the scene of one of the first anti-conscription protests, which took place at the Melbourne National Service office in Swanston Street in 1965 (Langley 1992:17-18).

In 1966, Lyndon B Johnson became the first President of the United States to visit Australia, invited by Prime Minister Harold Holt who pledged that Australia would go 'all the way with LBJ'. His visit to Melbourne, which involved a motorcade through the city centre, drew mass crowds. It also incited protests from students who opposed Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. A 1960s almanac recorded that:

*A[n] estimated 750,000 people turned out in Melbourne to welcome visiting US President Lyndon Johnson. Although most of the crowd are pro-LBJ, a strong anti-war contingent demonstrates against the visit, chanting 'LBJ, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?' (Reason 2016)*



Figure 10 and 11. President Johnson among the crowds on Swanston Street, Melbourne, 1966 (*Age*, 22 October 1966)

While early protests were relatively small in size, in the late-1960s there was an increased sense that the war in Vietnam was one 'that couldn't be won'. The peace movement grew in popularity and momentum as a result (Hamel-Green).

The Vietnam moratorium protests, the first of which took place on 8 May 1970, were the largest public demonstrations in Australia's history until that time and represented a growing discontent towards the government's commitment to the Vietnam War in general and conscription in particular. The primary objectives were to force the withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam and end conscription. The protests took place during a period of great social change in Australia, when people from a range of backgrounds were prepared to defy authority.

A total of 200,000 people across Australia took part in the First Moratorium. It was the Melbourne city centre that hosted the largest event – 70,000 people marched peacefully down Bourke Street led by organiser Jim Cairns. This



equated to more than one in 30 Melburnians. The Australian Council of Trade Union (ACTU) president at the time, Bob Hawke, described the moratorium rally and march as 'the most significant public participation in a political event' (*Age* 9 May 1970:1); another reporter stated that: 'It was, without doubt, the most impressive demonstration seen in Melbourne. The sheer weight of numbers alone was staggering...It was a legitimate expression of opinion by a substantial section of the population' (*Age* May 1970:15).

As reported in the *Age* the day following the First Moratorium, 'the successful demonstration virtually guarantees that more mass demonstrations will be attempted, perhaps in support of causes other than Vietnam. The Vietnam Moratorium Committee has given enlarged meaning to the notion of peaceful public dissent...' (*Age* 9 May 1970:15).

The intense social activism of the late-1960s was also embodied in the Women's Liberation Movement, a feminist movement that fought for equal civil rights and personal and social liberation. In 1969, women's liberationists met outside the Commonwealth Offices in Melbourne to protest against the repeated failure of the Arbitration Commission to award equal pay for equal work. Though the Commission ultimately awarded equal pay to women, this only applied to strictly equal work. In 1972, the Melbourne Women's Liberation set up a centre at 16 Little La Trobe Street to act as a gathering place for members of the movement (Fairbanks).



Figure 12. Marchers moving down Collins Street during the Vietnam Moratorium, 1970 (Australian War Memorial, P00671.009)



Figure 13. First Vietnam Moratorium in Melbourne, 1970 (State Library of Victoria)

#### 7.4 City Square debates

Another controversial issue in central Melbourne in the postwar period was the provision of a city square. Robert Hoddle's design for the city of Melbourne lacked any form of civic or open space within the grid, but reserved blocks or allotments for markets, public buildings, and churches. The lack of any public space or sweeping



boulevards was criticised as early as 1850, and proposals for public squares within the Hoddle Grid cropped up regularly from the 1850s.

A city square for Melbourne was a common topic of discussion throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with frequent debate about the most appropriate location for such a space. In 1966, when the Queen Victoria Building on the corner of Swanston and Collins streets, and the adjacent City Club Hotel opposite the Town Hall were demolished pending future development, Council decided that was a good site for the long-debated city square, and purchased the land.

Lord Mayor Bernard Evans welcomed the decision, stating the 'decision by the City Council to proceed with the first stage of the project is a welcome initiative in the long, frustrating fight for a more beautiful Melbourne' (*Age* 5 July 1966:2). Those opposed to the plan criticised the chosen location, bemoaning the fact that 'the site suggested, near the Town Hall, would create a dead frontage which would restrict Melbourne's business development' (*Age* 7 September 1960:6).

Despite this opposition, Council proceeded to acquire properties along Swanston Street between the Town Hall and St Paul's Cathedral, and east up to and including the Regent Theatre. Buildings purchased included the Cathedral Hotel, Cathedral House, Guy's Buildings (demolished 1969), Green's Building and the Town Hall Chambers (demolished 1971) as well as Wentworth House and Regency House on Flinders Lane. The Regent Theatre was also slated to be demolished, but was saved by a union ban (Annear 2005:215-225).

A brief for the City Square was developed and it was here that the political and social climate of the 1960s first intersected with architectural outcomes, coinciding as it did with Australia's involvement in the war in Vietnam and the resultant protest marches that took place along Swanston and Collins streets. Councillors, concerned that the creation of a large public square would encourage protests and demonstrations by creating a platform to stage such mass events, decided that the square would be designed in such a way that there would be no potential for the public to gather in large numbers (Reed 2011). A national design competition was held and architects Denton, Corker & Marshall were awarded the commission. A makeshift plaza, paved and planted to offset the demolition hoardings, was developed on the site of the future City Square in 1970 (Annear 2005:223, Figure 15). This site did little to assuage the Government's fears about inciting 'the spirit of democracy' – the plaza providing the ideal location to stage a large-scale Labor rally in protest of Gough Whitlam's dismissal in November 1975 (Figure 16).

After decades of debate, Melbourne's City Square was finally opened in 1980. (May 2008d)



Figure 15. The temporary plaza on the site of the future City Square, 1970 (State Library of Victoria H2003.100/910)



Figure 16. Labor protest rally in City Square, November 1975 (State Library of Victoria H2012.140/488)

7.0 Shaping cultural life	
Sub-themes	Examples
Arts and creative life in the city	NGV International, St Kilda Road (1968)
	La Trobe Library Extension (State Library of Victoria) La Trobe Street (1961-65)
Belonging to an ethnic or cultural group	Pellegrini’s Espresso Bar 66 Bourke Street (1954) Stalactites Restaurant 177-183 Lonsdale Street (1978) Italian Waiters Club, 20 Meyers Place China Town Little Bourke Street (remodelled in 1960s)
City Square debates	City Square, 44-86 Swanston Street (1980)

## 8.0 Enjoying the city

### 8.1 Expressing civic pride

In 1948, Melbourne lord mayor Sir Raymond Connelly described Melbourne as a city ‘in the doldrums, a metropolis whose civic pride was wilting’ (Serle cited in Lewis et al 1993:203). The key events of Queen Elizabeth’s visit in 1954 and the 1956 Olympic Games did much to boost civic pride, attract investment and promote Melbourne to the world.

Queen Elizabeth II became the first reigning monarch to visit Australia in 1954. In anticipation of her visit, the city of Melbourne underwent a ‘royal face lift’, with decorations including a large illuminated crown on the domed roof over the main entrance to Flinders St Station and a bushland scene covering the upper part of the Coles’ store in Bourke St (*Weekly Times*, 24 February 1954:58). Her visit coincided with the city’s preparations for the 1956 Olympic Games.

### 8.2 Melbourne’s introduction to the world stage

The staging of the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne gave the city a major boost as an international tourist destination and won for Melbourne the reputation as the ‘friendly city’ (Context 2012:93).

As early as 1948, discussions had commenced regarding the ‘immediate development of important public works in the city’ to ‘merit selection of Melbourne for the 1956 Olympic Games’ (*Age* 15 October 1948: 8). Works proposed included the construction of subways and underground railways and a new Spencer Street station, as well as better parking facilities; reconstruction of leading hotels and the erection of new hotels; and modifications to the present licensing laws (*Age* 15 October 1948:8). Melbourne was announced as the host city of the 1956 Olympic Games at a meeting of the International Olympic Committee in Rome in 1949.

As the first Olympic Games to be held in the Southern Hemisphere, there was a public awareness that ‘we must not under-estimate the importance of the Games in presenting Australia to the world... Australians, particularly Victorians, should realise that the standard of preparation for the games must be of the highest order’ (*Age* 30 June 1950:2). Following the announcement in 1949 that Melbourne would host the games, there was a flurry to update the city’s image and, as Barry Humphries has wryly noted, “half of Victorian Melbourne was torn down in the stampede to be modern” (Heritage Alliance 2008:41).

A key concern was the low standard of Melbourne’s hotels, with the *Age* reporting that ‘it is apparent to all Australian travellers going abroad that our existing hotel accommodation is far below world standard. Staging the Games therefore gives Australia a chance to lift this standard, and to attract more visitors to the Commonwealth.’ (*Age* 30 June 1950:2) It was further reported that ‘hotels to accommodate visitors to the 1956 Olympic games in Melbourne will be designed on the most modern lines and will be situated mainly within the city limits’ (*Age* 23 March 1950:4).

Ultimately, only a handful of hotels were constructed in the city for the Olympic Games. Hosies Hotel (1954-56, Figure 17) at the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders streets, designed by architects Mussen, Mackay and Potter and the Town Hall Hotel (now demolished) were two hotels built in the city centre in anticipation of the Games.

Another widely reported issue at the time was Melbourne’s constrained licensing laws. Newspaper editorials raised the issue of Victoria’s restrictive liquor licensing laws from as early as 1949, stating that Olympic hospitality was a national matter and the licensing laws ‘should be changed so that city hotels can capture the ‘community atmosphere’ of American hotels’ (Herald, 25 June 1949:9). A Victorian referendum was held in March 1956 to extend hotel closing hours from 6pm to 10pm, but was defeated, with only six of the 66 state electorates voting in favour of ten o’clock closing. The ‘six o’clock swill’ ultimately remained in place during the Games. It proved somewhat of a curiosity for international visitors accustomed to more relaxed drinking and café cultures (Reeves 2016).

The 1956 Olympic Games were an important milestone in the city of Melbourne’s maturation and growth (Reeves 2016). The international event was a coming of age for Australian sport and proved that Melbourne, and Australia, was capable of hosting a global event never before held outside of Europe or the United States of America (ABC Archives).



Figure 17. Hosie's Hotel Melbourne, cnr. Elizabeth & Flinders Streets, 1955 (National Library of Australia)

### 8.3 Entertainment and socialising

The retail and entertainment precincts in Melbourne, which emerged in the early 1960s, were largely protected from consolidation and redevelopment due to lower plot ratio controls and difficulty in consolidating a sufficient number of properties to achieve a legitimate tower form. The level of redevelopment in these precincts is more modest, with fine grained, smaller sized allotments along with valued heritage fabric. During this phase, conservation of heritage buildings was not yet an intentional pursuit, but rather a residual effect of the prevailing logic of the planning system (CoM 2016:5-7).

Higher disposable income, more leisure time, and larger metropolitan populations created an increase in entertainment and tourism industries in every Australian capital city. According to Marsden, only the office and finance sector has had more impact on the physical expansion and alteration of existing places, especially in central Sydney and Melbourne. Even though increased suburbanisation from the 1950s led to the closure of entertainment venues and theatres in Melbourne's city centre, other venues opened. In 1970, for example, Hoyts Cinema Centre in Bourke Street opened the first multi-cinema complex in Australia.

Clubs have also historically been an important part of city life. The Lyceum Club for women built new premises at 2-18 Ridgway Place in 1959 while new clubrooms for the RACV Club were built at 123 Queen Street in 1961. Such places provided patrons with a space in the city to meet, network and promote cultural activities.

8.0 Enjoying the city	
Sub-themes	Specific examples
Melbourne's introduction to the world stage	Hosies Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street (1954-56)
Entertaining and socialising	Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-144 Bourke Street (1966-69) Mid City, 194-200 Bourke Street (1969-70)
	Lyceum Club, 2-18 Ridgway Place (1959) RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (1961)

## 10.0 Preserving and celebrating the city's history

### 10.1 Conserving the urban environment

After a lull in building activity in the city during the war years, Melbourne saw dramatic redevelopment from the late 1950s. Planning visions that described inner-city areas as ripe for development drew vocal protest from residents who saw the destruction of community, local business people who objected to the impact of freeways, and conservationists who opposed the loss of historic buildings (Marsden 2000:94).

The demolition of a number of historic buildings in the 1950s led to the formation of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) in 1956 and by the late 1960s, conservation efforts were driven by broad new alliances between residents, National Trusts and unions. In Melbourne for example, the Builders Labourers Federation worked with the National Trust in the 1970s to impose 'green bans' on buildings the union refused to demolish, including the Regent Theatre on Collins Street. This activism led to reforms to the planning scheme.

The Register of Historic Buildings was established in 1974 through the *Historic Buildings Act 1974* and this provided statutory power over specified historic buildings. However, despite being heritage listed, a terrace dwelling at 80 Collins Street was demolished in the mid-1970s in order to give the proposed Nauru House office tower a Collins Street address. This event helped to trigger a new Central City Interim Development Order, approved in June 1976, which introduced additional planning controls over demolition (Ramsay Consulting 2012:10).

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Australian Institute of Architects 2007 *Southern Cross Station*, available [http://dynamic.architecture.com.au/awards\\_search?option=showaward&entryno=2007030287](http://dynamic.architecture.com.au/awards_search?option=showaward&entryno=2007030287), accessed 5 March 2019.

Australian Institute of Architects 2017, 'Melbourne Terrace Apartments', *Nationally Significant 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Architecture*, available <http://www.architecture.com.au/events/state-territory/victorian-chapter/victorian-architecture>, accessed 17 May 2017.

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Tsutsumi, Jun and O'Connor, Kevin 2006, 'Time series analysis of the skyline and employment changes in the CBD of Melbourne', *Applied GIS* Vol 2 No 2:8.1–8.12. DOI:10.2104/ag060008.

#### Unpublished reports and papers

Goad, Phillip, 'The 1960s city: heritage's problem child, *An international conference to explore approaches to the preservation of urban built heritage, with a focus on Melbourne*.

Rymer, R 2018, supporting research material, unpublished.

## Appendix 1

### A comparison of the *City of Melbourne Postwar Thematic Environmental History* themes with the *Victorian Framework of Historical Themes (2012)*

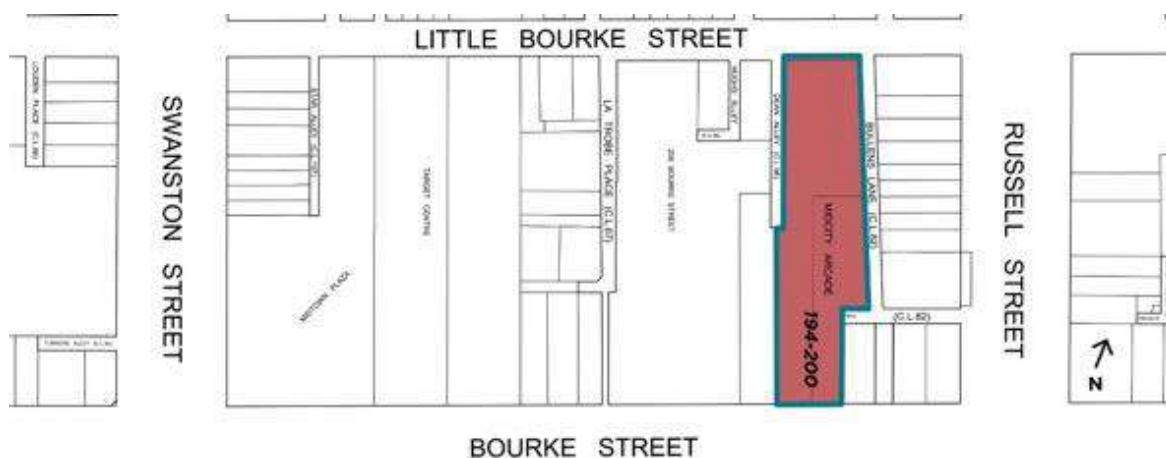
City of Melbourne TEH Themes (based on 2012 TEH)	Victorian Framework of Historical Themes
Shaping the urban landscape	6.2 Creating Melbourne 9.3 Achieving distinction in the arts 2.5 Migrating and making a home
Governing, administering and policing the city	6.2 Creating Melbourne 7.3 Maintaining law and order
Building a commercial city	5.2 Developing a manufacturing capacity 5.3 Markets and retailing 5.5 Banking and finance
Creating a functioning city	3.3 Linking Victorians by rail 3.4 Linking Victorians by road in the twentieth century 3.5 Travelling by tram 3.7 Establishing and maintaining communications 8.3 Providing health and welfare services
Living in the city	6.7 Making homes for Victorians
Working in the city	5.8 Working
Shaping cultural life	2.5 Migrating and making a home 2.6 Maintaining distinctive cultures 7.2 Struggling for political rights 9.2 Nurturing a vibrant arts scene
Enjoying the city	5.6 Entertaining and socialising 5.7 Catering for tourists 9.1 Participating in sports and recreation
Preserving and celebrating the city's history	7.5 Protecting Victoria's heritage

## INDIVIDUAL POSTWAR PLACE CITATIONS





<b>SITE NAME</b>	Hoyts Mid City Cinemas
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	194-200 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101204



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b> 2011		<b>SURVEY BY:</b> Graham Butler	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	N/A	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	Yes – interim controls HO1002, HO507
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Bogle & Banfield	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	B
		<b>BUILDER:</b>	E A Watts Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1965)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1969-70

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.10 Brutalism and brickwork
8 Enjoying the city	8.3 Entertainment and socialising

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Coffee palace, temperance hall
1920s	Retail or warehouse, drapers
1960s	Retail, cinema, carpark

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

## SUMMARY

Hoyts Mid City Cinema, built in 1969-70 and designed by Bogle Banfield, is associated with the increase in leisure and tourism provided in the city centre in the 1960s., and one of several significant brutalist buildings in the City of Melbourne.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Brutalism and brickwork**

Brutalism was another architectural style that emerged in commercial building design in Australia as early as 1959, when Harry Seidler used off-form concrete for an eight-storey office block in Ultimo, NSW. That same year, Melbourne architect Kevin Knight (from the office of Oakley & Parkes) prepared plans for the International Order of Oddfellows (IOOF) Building at 380 Russell Street, Melbourne that broke new ground with its banded façade of reinforced concrete spandrels.

Based on the work of modern architecture pioneer Le Corbusier, and largely inspired by his design for the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseilles (1952), this architectural style became widely accepted internationally. Brutalism incorporated ideas of integrity in expression of materials (especially off-form concrete), structure and function, and often gave rise to dramatic sculptural forms (VHD Hoyts Cinema Centre).

Brutalism became more widespread in central Melbourne in the 1970s. The Mid City Centre at 194-200 Bourke Street (Bogle & Banfield, 1969-70), is a notable example, with its façade of chamfered concrete volumes.

During the 1960s and 70s, face brickwork also made a return with the Houston Building at 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1964-65), the State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton & Lobb, 1967-68) and the 13-storey Nubrik House at 269-275 William Street by architects Buchan, Laird & Buchan (1972) (NTAV 2014:22).

### **Entertainment and socialising**

The retail and entertainment precincts in Melbourne, which emerged in the early 1960s, were largely protected from consolidation and redevelopment due to lower plot ratio controls and difficulty in consolidating a sufficient number of properties to achieve a legitimate tower form. The level of redevelopment in these precincts is more modest, with fine grained, smaller sized allotments along with valued heritage fabric. During this phase, conservation of heritage buildings was not yet an intentional pursuit, but rather a residual effect of the prevailing logic of the planning system (CoM 2016:5-7).

Higher disposable income, more leisure time, and larger metropolitan populations created an increase in entertainment and tourism industries in every Australian capital city. According to Marsden, only the office and finance sector has had more impact on the physical expansion and alteration of existing places, especially in central Sydney and Melbourne. Even though increased suburbanisation from the 1950s led to the closure of entertainment venues and theatres in Melbourne's city centre, other venues opened. In 1970, for example, Hoyts Cinema Centre in Bourke Street opened the first multi-cinema complex in Australia.

Clubs have also historically been an important part of city life. The Lyceum Club for women built new premises at 2-18 Ridgway Place in 1959 while new clubrooms for the RACV Club were built at 123 Queen Street in 1961. Such places provided patrons with a space in the city to meet, network and promote cultural activities.

### **SITE HISTORY**

Hoyts Pictures formed in 1909, commenced screenings at St. George's Hall, Bourke Street, (later, Hoyts De Luxe), and gradually built up their empire of cinemas. Initially an Australian company, their

success at creating exhibiting venues attracted Hollywood's interest and 20th Century Fox's acquisition of a controlling share meant that a cartel was formed between film exhibitor and maker.

Meanwhile, the company built up a suburban chain of over 40 outlets during the period 1920-40, which remained active until the first drive-ins in 1953 and the advent of television, in 1956. A subsequent reduction of hardtop cinema audiences caused a rationalisation of large single-screen cinemas. The original Capitol (2200 seats) was rebuilt in the 1960s, the Regent (3200 seats) and Plaza and Paris (former Lyceum) closed in 1969-70.

Mid City was not a Hoyts' project. Architect and entrepreneur, Gordon Banfield, and the company, Ralton Holdings, developed two cinemas (932 and 250 seats), a shopping arcade and a car park (entered from Little Bourke St) to the 1969 design of Bogle & Banfield, as constructed by E A Watts Pty Ltd. The Hoyts company was approached as potential lessees and after fitting out the interior, opened with a crowd of 5000 in November 1970. The Hoyts Cinema Centre had already opened the year before, almost completing the company's rationalisation of their City Cinemas from old venues to new. Expectations that a third cinema would be incorporated in the Mid City complex were realised in December 1975, when part of the once vast upper level foyer space was taken up for an 'intimate' 220 seat venue. Bogle & Banfield and Dolphin were the architects and builders.

Another phase of the Theatre's development was superficial renovations, designed by Melbourne architect, Ronald Fitch, in 1979, while the retail arcade, which had never been prosperous, was refurbished in 1977-8.



Figure 1. Mid City Cinemas, constructed 1969-70, photo date unknown. (Source: National Trust)

#### *Bogle & Banfield Associates, architects*

Bogle & Banfield Associates was a partnership formed between Gordon Douglas Banfield (1922-2007) and Alan Bogle (1902-1976). Bogle was articled to Louis Williams of North and Williams and later worked with Irwin and Stephenson. In 1945, he joined the influential practice of Harry Norris. Banfield worked in Queensland before also joining Norris' office in 1954, entering partnership with Banfield in 1959. The practice flourished until Bogle's retirement in 1968 after which Banfield became

a large player in property in the city of Melbourne. The work of the practice was characterised by bold and confident buildings including the use of Brutalism (Goad and Willis eds. 2012:95).

In the tradition of new cinemas, Mid City struck a more adventurous note than contemporary city commercial buildings, freed from the needs of fenestration or natural light. Bogle and Banfield's core of designers and project architects (later as the firms PINK and Joyce & Nankevell) had already shown an innovative approach to design in the Japanese Brutalist Total Car park building, Russell Street, and the striking St. Vincent's Private Hospital, Victoria Parade. Bogle & Banfield had won prizes for their Sandown Racecourse Grandstand (1962) and they also designed the former City of Doncaster Municipal Offices in 1970.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Mid City Cinemas extends from Bourke Street through to Little Bourke Street. Opening to Bourke Street is the cinema and retail frontage, whilst Little Bourke Street was designed as a carpark entrance, now partially infilled by a retail frontage. The building is designed in the brutalist style that emerged in the 1950s. Brutalism might loosely be characterised as a desire to achieve aesthetic effect through the deliberately frank expression of building construction, materials and technology,

Mid City Cinemas has a sculptural form and uses an exposed off-form concrete finish. An early use of the now ubiquitous trowelled-on aggregate finish, the architects used a red oxide applied front and back in a rich burst of colour in contrast to the natural concrete of the side walls. Where needed, windows are recessed behind concrete louvres at the top and bottom of each elevation, forming a deliberate contrasting element.

The Bourke Street awning is supported on two deep paired cantilevered beams. Of a similar scale to adjoining buildings and neutral in a fenestration sense, the rich colouring and bold forms of Mid City are a marked contrast within the commercial streetscape.

## **INTEGRITY**

Unusually smart for a car park entrance, the Little Bourke Street elevation originally had large areas of curved butt-glazing and, as a focal point, a space-age yellow bubble Cashier's Office guarded car park entry and exit (now gone) which was also used at the Total Carpark. Fashionable fittings and materials like Pirelli rubber were used here and in the arcade beyond (now demolished).

At the Bourke Street end of the lobby, for a brief period, there was an unusual group of interlocked mushroom coloured cylinders which served as offices, (now demolished), while the Theatres themselves were austere, if comfortably, finished.

The glazed balustrade is an addition to the cantilevered verandah, as is the glazing that has replaced concrete louvres. Inside there were the spacious lobby areas where the 'floating' roof plane hovered with lights dotted like stars, however these lobbies are since altered. Signs have been added and details altered on the exterior and interior.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

There are currently two State-listed brutalist buildings in the City of Melbourne, one of which is also a cinema complex.



*Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-144 Bourke Street, 1966-69 (VHR H2335; HO1094)*

Designed by architect Peter Muller, the Former Hoyts Cinema Centre introduced the first multi-cinema complex to Victoria and consequently has an important association with the development of the cinema industry in the State. The Former Hoyts Cinema Centre is of architectural significance as a highly innovative and individualistic building with a distinctive tower which dominates the overall design. It is unique in Victoria (Victorian Heritage Database Place ID 196067).



Figure 2. Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-144 Bourke Street constructed 1966-69. (Source: VHD)

*Total House, 170-190 Russell Street, 1964-65 (VHR H2329; HO1095, HO507 Little Bourke Street Precinct)*

Total House is a landmark of post-World War Two modernist design and is one of the earliest and best expressions of Brutalist architecture in Victoria built in 1964-65 to a design by architects Bogle & Banfield Associates. Brutalism incorporated ideas of the integrity of expression of materials, structure and function. Total House reflects these ideals in differentiating the functional parts of the building and the 'honest' display of its materials and structure. Total House is also an outstanding example of Japanese influence on architecture in Victoria in the postwar period (Victorian Heritage Database Place ID 194652).



Figure 3. Total House 170-190 Russell Street constructed 1964-65. (Source: VHD)

Hoyts Mid City Cinemas is a later building than the two examples provided, however it is a representative example of brutalism and its external integrity is still regarded as fair. Mid City Cinema has been identified as significant in three heritage reviews of the Capital City Zone over a 20-year period.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
✓	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

### MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	Yes
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

### OTHER

Paint controls should be applied to the areas now painted in red-oxide.

## REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:  
Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975

Marsden, Susan 2000, *Urban Heritage: the rise and postwar development of Australia's capital city centres*, Australian Council of National Trusts and Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 2014, Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism, a Comparative Analysis of Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD 1955-1975.

The following sources and data were used for this assessment (Graeme Butler, 2011). Note that the citation prepared in 2011 did not provide in text referencing.

### *General sources*

Historic Buildings Preservation Council reports on the Melbourne Central Business District from the 1970s;

Melbourne City Council on-line i-Heritage database;

Mahlstedt fire insurance map series held in the State Library of Victoria collection and Melbourne University Archives;

Daily newspaper reports such as 'The Argus';

Australian Architecture Index (AAI), prepared by Professor Miles Lewis and others;

Melbourne City Council building application drawings and files held at Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Public Records Office.

### *Building Permit Applications*

18/7/1969 40693 New Building \$1,309,000

14/4/1975 45610 est. \$120,000 'A Cinema' (194-200)

26/2/1976 46540 \$6000 alterations to ground floor (200)

Peter Wallace, 1986, Hoyts Corporation Pty. Ltd. Letter to Graeme Butler: Opening 26/11/1970 (see 'The Age' 27/11/1970: 2) 5000 attend opening

National Trust of Australia (Vic)

File Number B6566 File only

'Venue' web site, <http://caarp.flinders.edu.au/venue/424/view>

### *References*

Goad, P. and Wills, J., 2012, *The Encyclopaedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press

Cinema & Theatre Historical Society 1997, Cinema index: Melbourne cinemas, suburban cinemas, Victorian drive-ins. CATHS, Victoria.

Kilderry, D: <http://www.driveinsdownunder.com.au/projectionbooths/midcitybox.htm>

Walters, T 2009, *The Picture Palaces of Melbourne*, p. 235 '

*Sands & McDougall Melbourne*

Where required directory extracts were obtained chiefly from *Sands & McDougall Melbourne* or Victorian Directories dating from the 1850s to 1974.

1974

194-204 Mid-City Pharmacy

194-204 Mid-City Cinemas 4 & 5

194-204 Mid-City Shopping Centre: lists numerous retailers in centre.

(D1961 200-204 Sharpe Brothers Pty. Ltd. drapers)

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	B
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<b>Central City Heritage Study Review 1993</b>	C
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<b>Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002</b>	B
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	B
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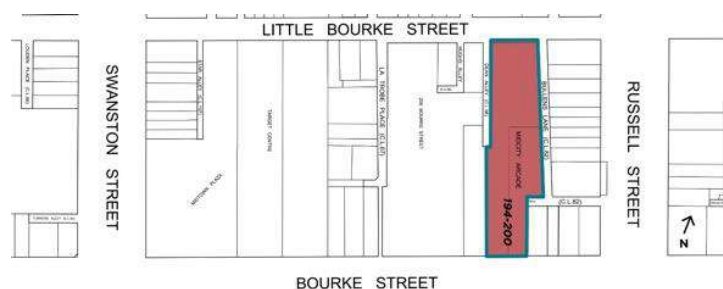


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Hoyts Mid City  
Cinemas



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

Hoyts Mid City Cinemas at 194-200 Bourke Street, Melbourne, built 1969-70 and designed by Bogle & Banfield architects.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing; and
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street and first floor levels are not significant.

### How it is significant?

Hoyts Mid City Cinemas at 194-200 Bourke Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Hoyts Mid City Cinema is historically significant as part of the increase in leisure and tourism provided in Melbourne, as the city became a place of entertainment made possible by higher disposable incomes and more leisure time from the 1960s. The establishment of Mid City and the Cinema Centre marked a turning point to more modern and intimate cinemas, following the closure of the large picture theatres of the interwar period. The Bourke Street location of the cinema followed over 120 years of the traditional siting of theatres in Melbourne. (Criterion A)

Hoyts Mid-City Cinemas is a representative example of a small class of brutalist buildings in the City of Melbourne. Popularised by architects in the mid-1960s, brutalism as a movement persisted until the late

1980s. Architects Bogle & Banfield Associates provided two of the best examples of brutalism in Melbourne with Total House and the Mid City Cinemas. With Peter Muller's Hoyts Cinema Centre as an early and particularly large-scale example, these three buildings provide an excellent record of this movement. Both the Mid City and the Hoyts Cinema Centre are stylistically distinctive designs among the small number of new cinemas built in the postwar period. (Criterion D)

Hoyts Mid-City Cinemas is significant for its sculptural form that is highlighted by the red-oxide colour that contrasts with the off-form concrete of the side walls. As a building requiring little natural light, the brutalist architecture of the cinema complex relies primarily on an articulation of solid form. The slim concrete vertical louvres in front of the glazing are a contrast to the solid mass of the main part of the building. (Criterion E)

#### **Primary source**

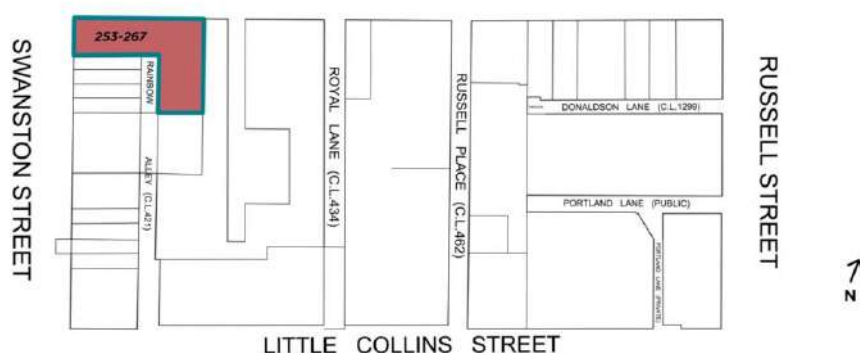
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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)

<b>SITE NAME</b>	Royal Mail House
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	253-267 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101138



BOURKE STREET


**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** No

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** D Graeme Lumsden

**BUILDER:** Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1961-1963

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail/Workshop, Office, Education, Hotel
1920s	Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Retail, Hotel
1960s	Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Office, Post Office, Telephone Kiosk

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

Royal Mail House was designed by architect D Graeme Lumsden and constructed in 1961-1963 for owners, The Hammerson Group (also referred to as the Hammerson Property and Investment Co Ltd, London), who invested in retail developments.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.



### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.



Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

Royal Mail House was designed by architect D Graeme Lumsden and constructed in 1961-1963 for owners, The Hammerson Group (also referred to as the Hammerson Property and Investment Co Ltd, London), who invested in retail developments (RAIA; BAP; *Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3). The builders were Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd (*Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3). The site was formerly occupied by the nineteenth century Royal Mail Hotel (S&Mc).

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the present building in May 1961 (estimated to cost £203,000), with construction commencing that same month (BAI; *Canberra Times*, 23 May 1961:2). Various design revisions were lodged with Council up to November 1962 incorporating 'alterations and additional storeys' (increasing the project cost to £392,000) (BAI). Construction was paused for six months, resuming in November 1962, following the addition of three more floors to the design (*Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3).

Architectural drawings dated September 1962 and February 1963 showed plans of the ground floor and elevational drawings (Figure 1 - Figure 3). The steel-framed building was designed with notable features such as a mosaic-tiled façade, 'chequer-board' patterned windows, stepped window surrounds and a curvilinear canopy to the ground-level shopfronts (*Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3; NTAV 2014:38, 47). Goad (2012: 417) notes that the 'sinusoidal canopy' that wraps around the façade 'could have earned the label "featurist"' in Robin Boyd's 1960 publication, *The Australian Ugliness*. The ground-level comprised retail outlets, including a shop occupied by Telepost, advertised as

'Australia's first 24-hour self-service post office', which also served as a public telephone kiosk with 45 pay telephones (Figure 7 – Figure 9) (*Canberra Times*, 1 May 1964:25). The kiosk also served as the main entrance to the building (Figure 1).

Following completion, Royal Mail House was occupied by the Post Master General's Department and Department of Interiors, as recorded in the 1965 Sands & McDougall Directory (S&Mc). A series of photos dating to the mid-late 1960s (Figure 4 – Figure 9) show the completed building (bearing the name 'Royal Mail House' on the Swanston Street elevation; since removed), shopfronts and ground-level canopy.

Advertisements published in *The Age* in 1984 (11 Aug 1984:79) noted that the office space had been completely refurbished, to let to tenants. In recent years, the Bourke Street façade has been integrated into art installations, such as Alexander Knox's permanent seasonal winter installation 'Maxims of Behaviour', in 2008. In 2019, the western elevation has a large-scale advertising panel and the rooftop holds a billboard that appears to have been in situ in the 1980s. Part of the window surrounds have been removed from the Bourke Street elevation (date unknown).

### **D Graeme Lumsden, architect**

Donald Graeme Lumsden was born in Malvern, Victoria in 1915. He enrolled in the architecture course at Melbourne Technical College (now RMIT) before transferring to the University of Melbourne. From 1938 to 1940 he studied at the university's Architectural Atelier, while simultaneously completing his articles in the office of A & K Henderson. By 1948, Lumsden had established his own private architectural practice, operating from premises in South Yarra (*Age*, 30 Nov 1948), where he specialised in the design of industrial complexes. A substantial number of his commissions were located in Tasmania where staff member, Ted Ashton, resided to oversee this branch of the practice.

Despite the focus on large industrial projects, Lumsden's practice also designed office buildings in central Melbourne in the 1960s, including Investment House at 116 Queens Street (1960) and Royal Mail House, at the corner of Bourke and Swanston streets (1961-63).

From 1970 to 1979, the firm was known as Lumsden, Ashton & Hale, before becoming Lumsden & Ashton following Bill Hale's departure. Lumsden closed the practice following Ashton's own departure sometime later.

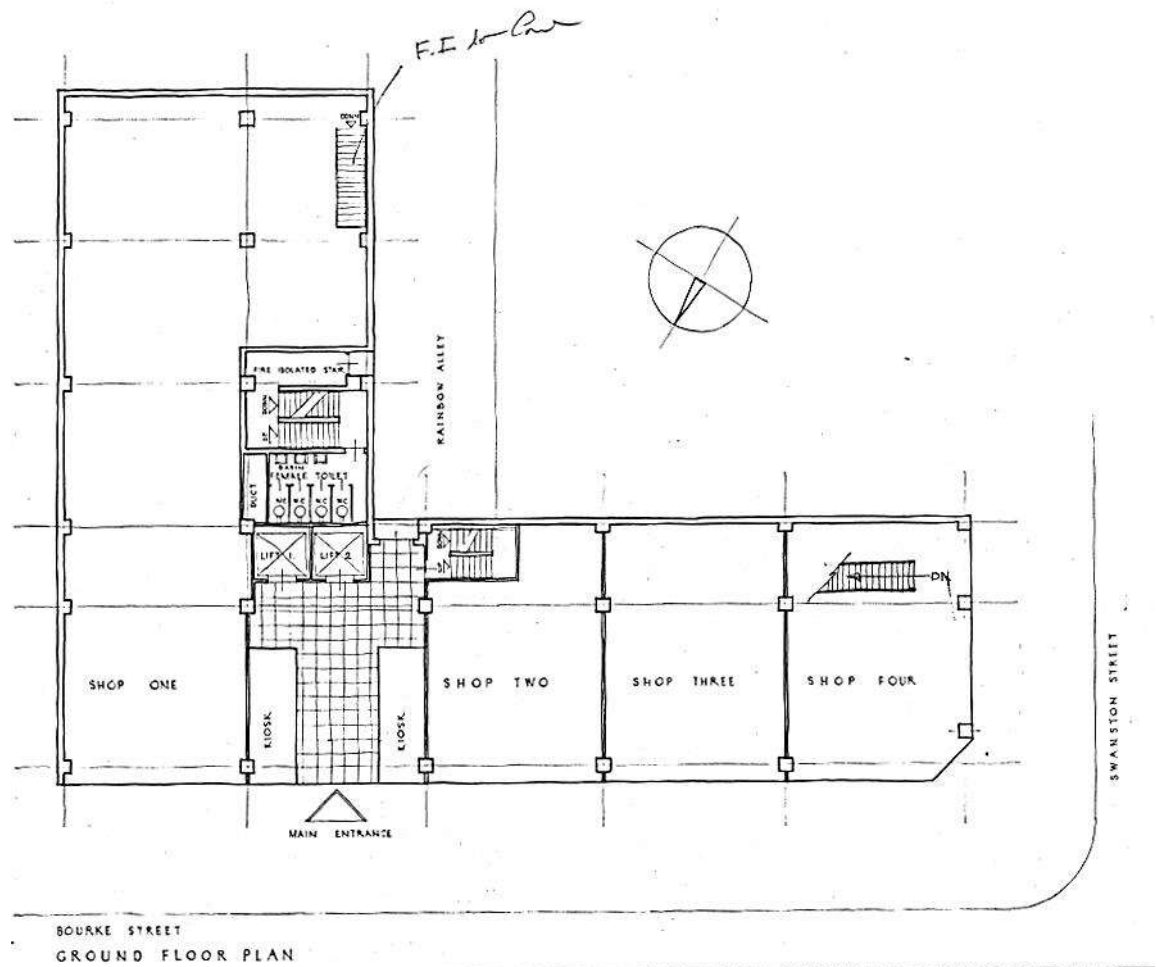


Figure 1. Ground floor plan by D Graeme Lumsden, dated September 1962 (BAP).

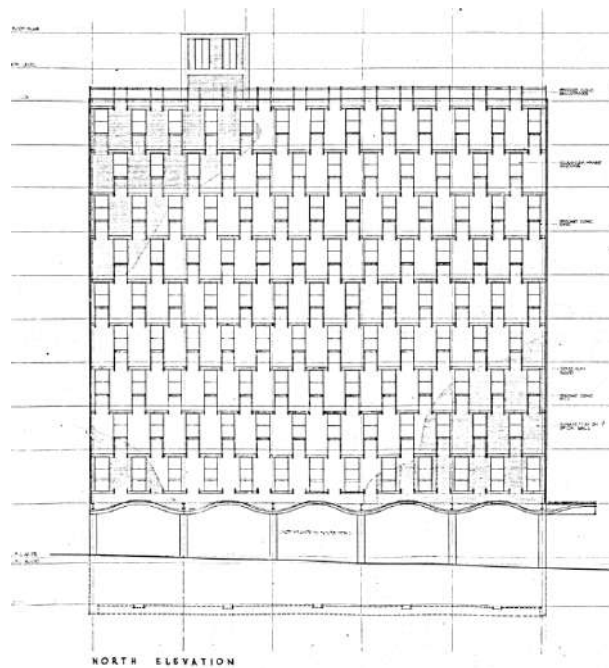


Figure 2. North elevation to Bourke Street. Drawing date stamped February 1963 (BAP).

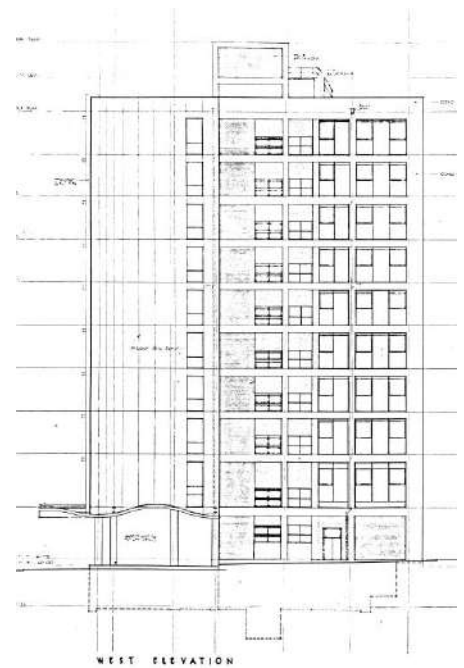


Figure 3. West elevation. Drawing date stamped February 1963 (BAP).



Figure 4. Royal Mail House in the final stages of completion in 1963 (NAA, Wells, photographer, A1200, L45445).



Figure 5. Detail of a 1966 photo showing the western end of the completed building (SLV, K. J. Halla, photographer, Image H36133/209).



Figure 6. The completed building in 1967 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/416).



Figure 7. A 1967 photo showing the shopfronts and soffit of the canopy (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H98.30/237).





Figure 8. The completed Telepost shop in the 1960s (NAA: B5919, 268).



Figure 9. Interior of the Telepost shop (NAA: B5919, 268).



Figure 10. Royal Mail House in the early 1980s (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler16291; photo dated 1982-1985).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street is a 9-storey commercial building located at the south-east corner of Bourke and Swanston streets. Constructed in 1961-63 to a design by D Graeme Lumsden, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is L-shaped in form with a main broad frontage to the north, facing Bourke Street, a narrow façade fronting Swanston Street, and a north-south wing along the eastern boundary of the allotment. The latter is situated behind a row of four three-storey Victorian buildings which front Swanston Street. Rainbow Alley runs between the two to provide lane access to the buildings from Little Collins Street.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with concrete parapet, east and south walls of concrete and face brickwork, and west wall of precast concrete panels. The latter presented a blank wall to Swanston Street with a single vertical strip of windows at the southern extremity (this entire façade appears to have been reclad recently and the strip of windows covered or



removed). The broad feature façade, facing Bourke Street, is a highly articulated curtain wall with rows of individual rectangular, aluminium framed windows set into a mosaic tile-clad wall of precast concrete panels. Deep projecting cast in-situ concrete sunhoods and precast concrete sills, supported on brick spandrels, provide definition to the otherwise frameless window openings. The resulting façade retains a highly patterned chequerboard appearance, despite the removal of concrete fins which connected the sunhoods and window sills above.

Royal Mail House is accessed at street level by a broad entrance in Bourke Street (originally an open arcade), which is flanked by retail outlets. Protection at street level is provided by a highly innovative undulating, cantilevered awning which lines both the Bourke Street and Swanston Street facades.

## INTEGRITY

Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1961-63. Changes include the enclosing of the original arcade entrance and alterations to shop facades at street level, removal of the precast concrete fins from the Bourke Street façade and the recladding of the entire façade of the narrow west façade facing Swanston Street.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey office building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Royal Mail House is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. Located on a prominent corner site, the building's broad feature façade and highly distinctive undulating cantilevered verandah at street level, can be clearly observed from both Bourke and Swanston streets. Despite removal of the vertical window fins, changes at street level and the recladding of the narrow west façade, Royal Mail House remains highly intact to its original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to Royal Mail House. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)





Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)





Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)





Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street  
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William  
Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street  
(Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building,  
359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,  
c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird  
& Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen  
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

### Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a number of other examples identified above – Royal Mail House clearly demonstrates this class of place.

## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

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*The Age*.

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985**D

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993**C

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**Review of Heritage  
overlay listings in the  
CBD 2002**Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**Ungraded

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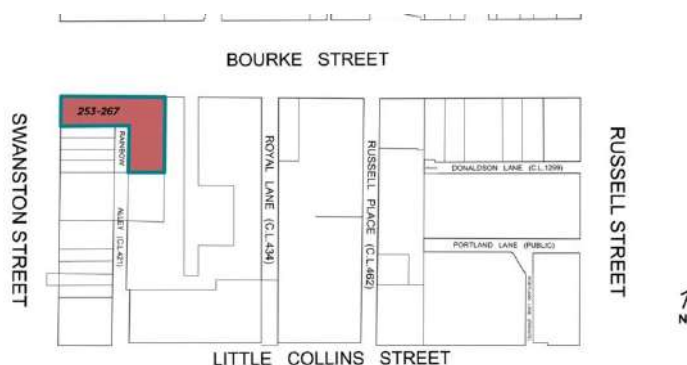


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Royal Mail House



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1961-63.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facades and the west façade facing Swanston Street are not significant.

### How it is significant?

Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1961-63 to a design by D Graeme Lumsden, Royal Mail House has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

Royal Mail House is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 9-storey building on a prominent CBD corner site, Royal Mail House clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s structure, particularly the broad feature façade comprising a highly articulated curtain wall of solid appearance and

distinct bands of windows with dominant hoods and sills that are set in a regular pattern across the entire wall, as well the highly distinctive undulating cantilevered verandah at street level and the use of materials such as mosaic tiles and precast concrete panels. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

**Primary source**

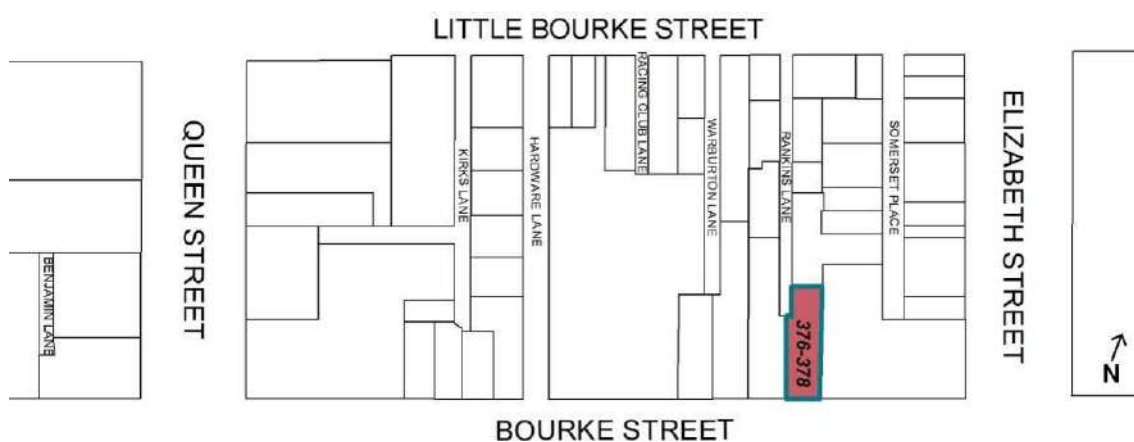
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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)

**SITE NAME** Former Coles and Garrard Building

**STREET ADDRESS** 376-378 Bourke Street, Melbourne

**PROPERTY ID** 101191



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2018

**SURVEY BY:** Context

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** H7822-1435

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** C

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Meldrum & Noad

**BUILDER:** Thompson & Chalmers

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1957

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
4 Creating a functioning city	4.3 Providing health and welfare services

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotels and lodgings
1920s	Offices
1960s	Offices

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

## SUMMARY

The former Coles & Garrard building at 376-378 Bourke Street, Melbourne, is a five-storey commercial curtain wall building built in the Post-War Modernist style. It was designed by architects Meldrum & Noad and opened in 1957. It was built for opticians Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd, Melbourne's largest optometry firm until it was sold to OPSM in 1988. Coles & Garrard had an association with the building from 1957 to c1986.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### Providing health and welfare services

Health, welfare and education services were historically established in Melbourne's city centre. The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street (1972-73) was one of many charities established as part of the Catholic Church's official missionary work to provide pastoral care, services and support for seafarers.

The Pharmaceutical Guild, established in Victoria in 1928 to ensure the quality of medicines and to establish a uniform scale of wages for pharmaceutical assistants, constructed a building at 18-22 Francis Street in 1954 to a design by Cowper, Murphy and Appleford. Optometrists, Coles and Garrard, established an office building and consulting rooms at 376 Bourke Street in 1957 to a design by architects Meldrum and Noad.

The Queen Victoria Hospital, established in La Trobe Street in 1896 as the first women's hospital in Victoria, moved to 210 Lonsdale Street in 1946. Its primary aim was to be a hospital 'For Women, By Women'. By 1965 it became the new Monash University's teaching hospital for gynaecology, obstetrics and paediatrics and changed from treating solely female patients to being a 'family hospital'. Renamed the Queen Victoria Medical Centre in 1977, it relocated to the Monash Medical Centre at Clayton in 1989 (Russell 2008).

### SITE HISTORY

The land comprising the subject property at 376-378 Bourke Street was first purchased by Joseph Solomon in November 1837, as part of Allotment 7, Block 20, in the City of Melbourne (Badman & S&Mc 1892). This site was originally addressed as 17 Bourke Street (S&Mc1885). The earliest occupation of the land was c1839, with a building at neighbouring Crown Allotment 8, Block 20 extending into the site. By 1850, it is suggested that a hotel might have occupied the site, and by 1859, William Smith had opened the New York Dining Rooms on the site (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 435; *Argus* 16 December 1859:1). This establishment continued to trade on the site for almost a century, under the name of either the New York Dining Rooms, or the New York Hotel, until the present building was erected (S&Mc 1955).

In 1946, a fire broke out in the hotel building, starting in the bottom of the lift well and working its way up to the top of the building, causing widespread damage and collapsing the roof (*Advocate* 9 October 1946:5). In 1956, the de-licensed four-storey premises of the New York Hotel was put up for auction (*Argus* 30 May 1956:15).

In 1957, an article in building and architecture journal *Cross-Section* noted the planned construction of a steel-framed four-storey (with provision for seven storeys) office block designed by Melbourne architects, Meldrum & Noad, for opticians Coles & Garrard on a 32-foot frontage at 376 Bourke Street (*Cross-Section* 1 May 1957:3, as cited in AAI, record no 87921).

Founded by H E Coles, opticians Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd opened in Melbourne in March 1922. Proprietor Earle Coles was described as 'feisty and energetic', and built his business on advertising and commercial contracts with government agencies. Coles regarded the firm as a commercial entity, a view that ran contrary to other leaders of the profession at the time who practised with professional restraint rather than as makers and sellers of spectacles. The Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd premises were originally located at an adjoining building (known as Cromwell Building) at 370-374 Bourke Street, which has since been demolished.



The firm expanded during the postwar period, establishing a branch in Geelong in 1940. Coles retired in 1948, and sold the business to 18 members of staff. The firm continued to grow during the 1950s, opening a branch in Bendigo by 1955 and another branch in Chadstone shopping centre by 1958. Further development ensued, with many branches being established in shopping centres in the following years.

By May 1957, the New York Hotel had been demolished, and foundations for the present building laid, alongside underpinning of adjacent buildings (BP 31202). The rendered brick office building with a curtain wall of blue spandrel panels and opening window sections was built to five-storeys and completed by 1958 (see Figure 1) (National Trust 2014:32).

By the time of construction of the subject building at 376-378 Bourke Street in 1957, the firm employed 120 people (ACO 2017). Coles and Garrard Pty Ltd was the largest optometry firm in Melbourne until it was sold to OPSM in 1988 and ceased trading under its name a few years later (ACO 2017).

The 1986 building permit card for the site notes that the structure was still referred to as the 'Coles Garrard Building' in 1986, indicating that the firm was still operating from the premises in this year. The building permit card notes a substantial 'refurbishment' in September 1986 without further details, and that it had a change of use at this time (MBAI). It is likely that the ground level was converted to retail this time, as the subject building comprised office and retail premises in 1987 (Age 8 December 1987:42).

Currently, the building houses a pharmacy and two businesses (CoMMaps).



Figure 1. Showing the Coles and Garrard building (second from RHS) at 376-378 Bourke Street in 1959. (Source: Fowler 1939, SLV [copyright](#))



Figure 2. Showing the Coles and Garrard building (second from right-hand side) in the 1960s. (Source: Halla 1960-170, Picture Victoria [copyright](#))

#### *Meldrum & Noad, Architects*

The architectural practice Meldrum & Noad was formed in 1938 by Percy Hayman Meldrum (1887-1968) and Arthur Aldred Noad. Meldrum had formerly been in partnership with A G Stephenson, practicing as Stephenson & Meldrum from 1921 before departing the firm in late 1937 due to a disagreement over the firm's direction. Arthur Noad had been the manager of the Melbourne office of Stephenson & Meldrum (Willis 2012: 450)

Percy Hayman Meldrum studied at Ballarat College and was articled to AA Fritsch from 1907 to 1913. Moving to London in 1914, Meldrum practiced as an aircraft designer at the War Office and established an atelier in Wells Street, London, which became a gathering place for Australian architects engaged in war service. At the end of World War One Meldrum joined the staff of the Architectural Association, where he taught A G Stephenson and Donald Turner. In 1921, he returned to Australia to join A G Stephenson as Stephenson & Meldrum. Practising as principal designer of Stephenson & Meldrum, he strongly encouraged the inclusion of murals and sculpture in the firm's projects. His work during the practice as Stephenson & Meldrum included Newspaper House, Collins Street (1932) and Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historic Museum (1930).

Meldrum practiced as Meldrum & Noad between 1937 and the 1950s, during which time he won the 1942 RVIA Street Architecture Medal for the National Bank of Australasia building in Collins Street (1938) (Willis 2012: 450). Meldrum went on to form Meldrum & Partners in 1959 before retiring from practice in 1965.

Meldrum & Noad were responsible for the design of a number of buildings in the Melbourne CBD, including the National Bank of Australasia, opened in 1939 at the corner of Collins and Williams

streets. An article of the time announced that the bank building was the first in the area to be built to the full height allowed by the City building regulations and therefore would have 'a decided influence on the future development' of that part of the city (*Journal of the RVIA* 1939:218). Meldrum & Noad also designed the BHP head office in Bourke Street, opened in 1958.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

376-378 Bourke Street is located on the northern side of Bourke Street between Elizabeth and Queen streets. It is a five-storey commercial curtain wall building in the Post-War Modernist style. It exhibits key characteristics of the style, particularly in the lightweight fine-grained modularity of the curtain wall façade.

The façade to Bourke Street comprises an aluminium framed non-loadbearing curtain wall set within an outline frame that appears to be of off-form concrete that returns forming the side boundary wall to the east. The curtain wall comprises alternating vertically glazed and solid panels to provide a lightweight grid across the façade. The frame is natural aluminium finish and the solid panels appear to be of blue coloured glass, aligned at the level of the upper floors. At each of the upper levels there are three openable sashes as the building predates the use of air conditioning. The side wall to the eastern boundary is solid concrete.

The retail and entry shopfront to Bourke Street has been replaced over time, and there is a heavy suspended box awning over the ground floor entry lobby, which is not sympathetic to the delicate modularity of the façade above.

It is a modestly scaled example of its style and period.

## **INTEGRITY**

The building is highly intact with very few changes visible to original fabric. The original non-loadbearing aluminium curtain wall with its alternating vertically glazed and solid panels remains intact. At street level, shop fronts have been altered and a heavy suspended box awning added. The building also retains its original built form and scale, materials and stylistic details. Overall, the building is of high integrity.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The former Coles and Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of multi-storey commercial buildings designed in the 1950s.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were designed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former Coles and Garrard Building. These are detailed below.

### **State-significant places**

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

## Locally-significant places

### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those constructed in the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Newton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.





Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

### Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (Bernard Evans, 1960).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).



## Analysis

The former Coles and Garrard Building is comparable to other central Melbourne buildings included on the HO, including Gilbert House at 100-104 Collins Street (significant in HO504), Coates House at 20 Collins Street (significant in HO504), Mering House at 276-278 Collins Street (significant in HO502) and the former Guardian Assurance Company building at 404-406 Collins Street. At five storeys, the former Coles & Gerard building at 376-378 Bourke Street is substantially lower-scaled than these examples. However, it is a highly intact, good representative example of early curtain-walled office building, clearly expressing the design aesthetic of the style based on repetitive horizontal and vertical modules rather than a vertical differentiation as utilised by the classically derived styles.

As a full-glazed curtain wall building, and for its scale, the degree of intactness is increasingly uncommon. Other early examples of this type, such as the six-storey former SDA House, 8-12 Market Street (assessed but not recommended in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) or the five-storey former National Insurance Company of New Zealand at 180 Queen (not recommended for assessment in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) have been substantially altered resulting in the loss of key design elements.

All of these examples and the subject building demonstrate the prominent Bauhaus grid aesthetic made possible by the use of a lightweight aluminium curtain wall system which maximises access to daylight. The vertical grid pattern is typical of the style with vertically alternating clear glass and opaque panels. The structure retains a high level of integrity above the ground floor, comparing favourably with other examples of the style identified above.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
✓	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

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## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	D
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 1993</b>	C
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<b>Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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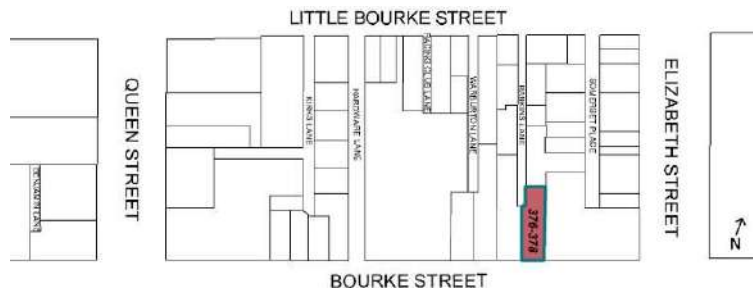
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Coles and Garrard Building



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The former Coles & Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street, Melbourne, a curtain-walled postwar commercial building built in 1957 to a design by Meldrum & Noad, is significant.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- Original building form and scale; and
- Original non-loadbearing curtain wall.
- Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The former Coles & Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street is of local representative and associative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The former Coles and Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street is significant as a highly intact example of the Post-War Modernist style offices utilised for commercial development in central Melbourne during the late 1950s and early 1960s. These buildings represented the new modernism in their modular, industrial Bauhaus inspired aesthetic incorporating features such as consistent access to daylight and open floor plans to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation. The building, designed by architects Meldrum & Noad, reflects the growth and progress in 1950s and 1960s Melbourne of locally established companies, resulting in many architecturally designed buildings being erected in the city. (Criteria D)



The former Coles & Garrard Building is significant for its long-term association with Victorian optometrists and spectacle makers, Coles & Garrard. The building was constructed for Coles & Garrard and the firm occupied the building for some 28 years, from 1958 to c1986. Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd, a Victorian-based company established in Melbourne in 1922, grew to become Melbourne's largest optometry firm, until it was taken over by OPSM in 1988. (Criterion H)

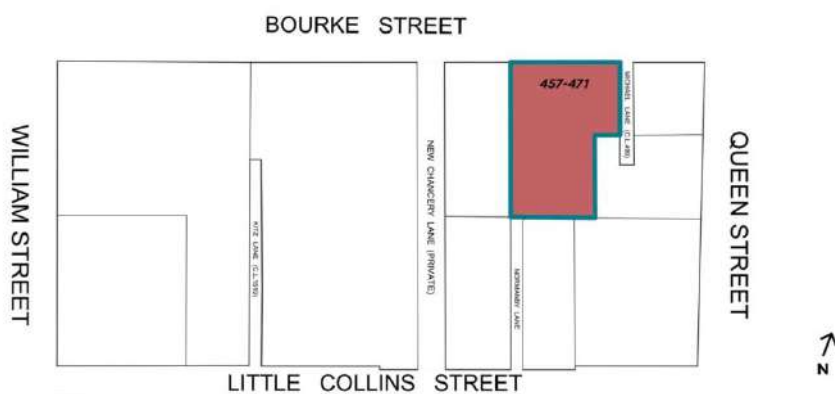
**Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Dalgety House
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	457-471 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101152



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** No

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** Ungraded

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners

**BUILDER:** Costain (Aust.) Pty Ltd

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1966-1968



## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail, Merchant, Office
1920s	Retail/Workshop, Office, Caretaker
1960s	Workshop, Office, Merchant

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The Former Dalgety House was designed by Sydney-based architects Peddle Thorp & Walker, with Meldrum & Partners as local supervising architects, and was constructed in 1966-68. Dalgety & New Zealand Loan Limited were the principal occupants of the building following its construction.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.



### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## **SITE HISTORY**

The Former Dalgety House was designed by Sydney-based architects Peddle Thorp & Walker, with Meldrum & Partners as local supervising architects, and constructed in 1966-68 (Figure 1 - Figure 4). The builders were Costain (Aust.) Pty Ltd (*Age*, 5 Jun 1968:24; 10 Jul 1968:26).

A permit application for the multi-storey office building was received by City of Melbourne in October 1966 (with an estimated project cost of \$4,250,000) (BAI). The *Age* reported on the building in the 'financial heart of Melbourne', that was nearing completion in June 1968, describing the 18-storey building with a basement, carpark for 35 cars, and a Bourke Street entrance comprising a terrazzo plaza, colonnade, steps and a ramp (*Age*, 5 Jun 1968:24; 19 Jun 1968:15). Another contemporary newspaper article reported that a feature of the building was that the air conditioning ducts for the main system were installed around the perimeter of the building, saving heights on each storey (*Age*, 10 Jul 1968:26).

The 1970 Sands & McDougall Directory listed the primary occupant of the building as Dalgety & New Zealand Loan Limited. Dalgety and Company Ltd had occupied a portion of the site from the 1880s, addressed to 471 Bourke Street in 1890. In 1900, the Sands & McDougall Directories described the company as merchants and importers, stock and station agents, and woolbrokers. By the mid-twentieth century, Dalgety and Company Ltd was a world-wide establishment and one of the biggest wool selling brokers in the world (*Victor Harbour Times*, 17 Jun 1960:3). The earlier building at the subject site occupied by Dalgety and Company Ltd, as well as the adjacent Optical House Chambers

(next to Michael Lane at 457-459 Bourke Street), were demolished to make way for the present building (S&Mc).

A series of photos dating to 1969 show the newly completed building (Figure 5 – Figure 7). Above the entrance was the name 'Dalgety House'. The ground floor lift lobby was designed with a stained glass panel designed by artist Leonard French (Figure 8), the abstract design representing the sun. French is primarily known for his design of the stained glass ceiling at the National Gallery of Victoria (1968) and series of windows at the National Library in Canberra (1967), displaying a planet theme.

#### **Peddle Thorp & Walker, architects**

James Peddle (1862-1930) arrived in Australia and practiced as an architect in Sydney from 1889. In 1902, Peddle employed an articled student (Samuel) George Thorp (1889-1967). Peddle left Thorp in charge of the Australian practice in 1911 and travelled to the United States where he established a practice in California. The partnership of Peddle & Thorp was formed in 1914. From 1920, Frederick H E Walker (1900-1950) served his articles at the firm before completing his studies, working in the United States and travelling. Walker re-joined the firm as partner in 1924, which established the firm Peddle, Thorp & Walker. Frank Thorp (1903-1968; George Thorp's younger brother) became the fourth partner in 1929. George Thorp travelled in 1953 and 1960 to review the latest overseas architectural developments and trends (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6).

From the 1950s, Peddle, Thorp & Walker asserted itself as a major Sydney postwar practice. The firm's design for AMP's Sydney headquarters on Phillip Street (1962) brought them international attention for designing the first skyscraper completed in Sydney (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6; Taylor 2001:58). The curved and glazed curtain wall tower broke the 150 foot (c45.75m) height limit and 'signalled a new era of skyscraper design and a race for height' (Goad & Higham 2012:536). The firm continued designing tall buildings in Sydney, including Sun Alliance House, Bridge Street (1964-65; demolished), Goldfields House, Pitt Street (1966), the Royal Exchange Building, Bridge Street (1967) and the ANZ Bank and Offices, Pitt Street (1972) (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6). In Melbourne, the firm designed Dalgety House on Bourke Street (1966-68) and Australia-Netherlands House on Collins Street (c1968-70), both in association with Melbourne-based architects Meldrum & Partners, as well as the multi-storey office building at 601 Bourke Street (1974).

By the 1980s the firm had grown substantially, with offices established interstate and in New Zealand, and by 2010, a number of offices were located throughout Asia. Since c2008, the firm has been called PTW Architects, with Peddle Thorp Architects continuing to operate in Melbourne, Brisbane and Auckland as separate offices and entities (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6).

#### **Meldrum & Partners, architects**

Percy H Meldrum (1887-1968) was born in Casterton, Victoria and studied architecture before being articled to A A Fritsch from 1907. He remained with Fritsch until 1913 before travelling to the United States and working in England. Meldrum returned to Australia in 1921 and joined A G Stephenson in practice as Stephenson & Meldrum from 1921 to 1937. Meldrum subsequently partnered with Arthur A Noad (1903-1973), forming Meldrum & Noad, before establishing Meldrum & Partners in 1959 (Willis 2012:450).

Meldrum & Noad are known to have designed the Coles and Garrard Building at 376-78 Bourke Street (1957) and the National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch at 85-91 Queen Street, Melbourne (1973).

Meldrum & Partners designed the multi-storey State Savings Bank building at 258-264 Little Bourke Street (1961) with Robert Cousland, and the State Electricity Commission building at 15 William Street (1965) (AIA). Meldrum & Partners acted as the local architects for Sydney-based firm Peddle Thorp & Walker, in the design and construction of Dalgety House on Bourke Street (1966-68) and Australia-Netherlands House on Collins Street (1968-70).

Meldrum partnered with Sydney-based architect Bill Burrows to form Meldrum Burrows, before Meldrum's son, Richard J Meldrum (1928-2004), joined the firm and Percy Meldrum retired in 1965. Meldrum Burrows gained prominence in the 1970s and '80s with large interstate and international projects (Willis 2012:450).

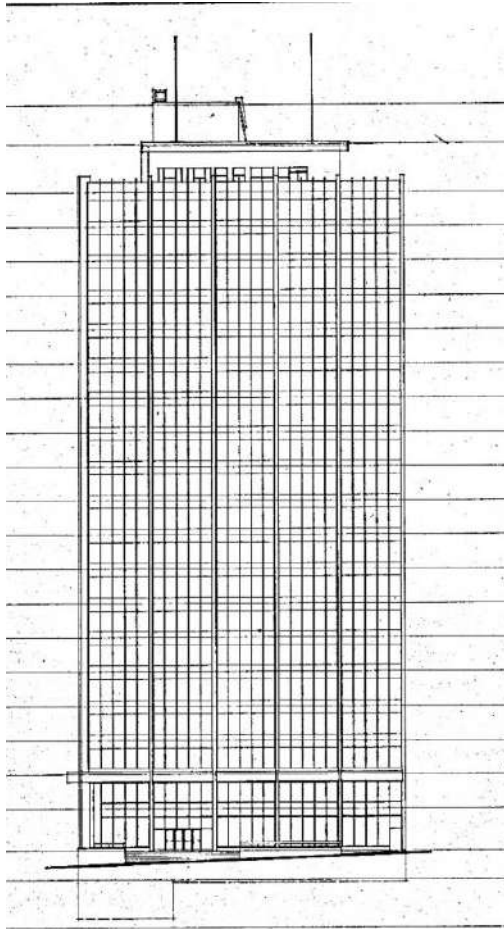


Figure 1. North (Bourke Street) elevation. Drawing by Peddle, Thorp & Walker, in association with Meldrum & Partners, dated August 1966 (BAP).

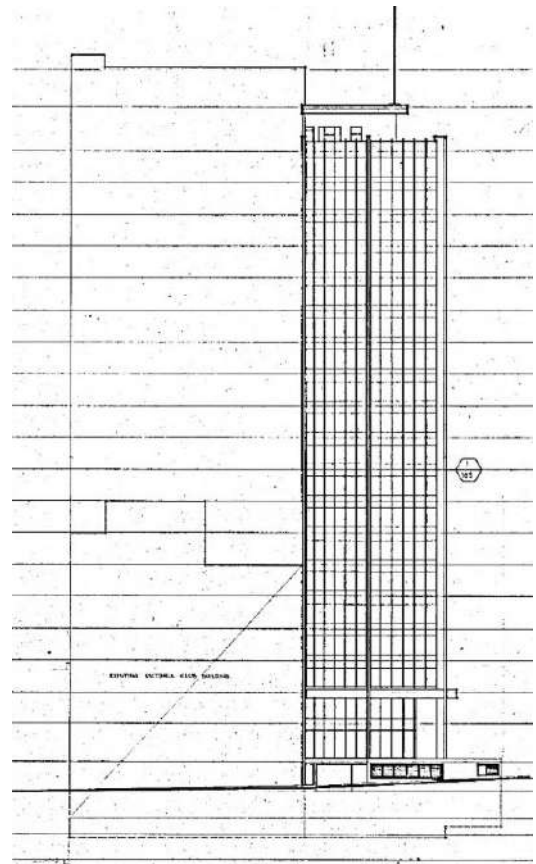


Figure 2. East (facing Queen Street) elevation. Drawings by Peddle, Thorp & Walker, in association with Meldrum & Partners, dated August 1966 (BAP).



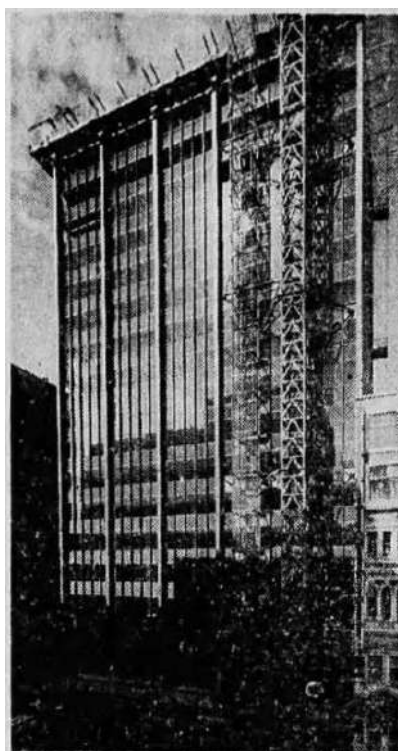


Figure 3. An image of the building nearing completion, published in *The Age* in June 1968 (*Age*, 5 Jun 1968:24).

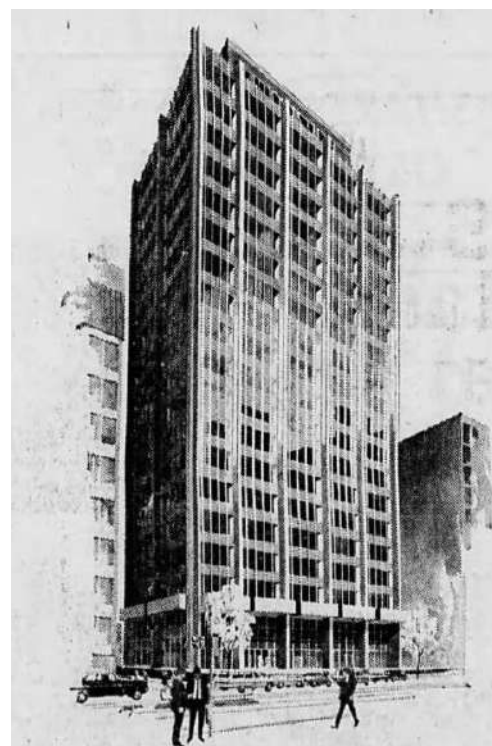


Figure 4. An illustration of the building, published in *The Age* in June 1968 (*Age*, 19 Jun 1968:15).



Figure 5. The newly completed building in 1969 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/364).



Figure 6. Photo dating to 1969 (Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/365).



Figure 7. The building in 1969 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/368).





Figure 8. A 1969 photo of the stained glass panel in the ground floor lift lobby, designed by artist Leonard French (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/379).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Dalgety House at 457-471 Bourke Street is an 18-storey commercial building located on the south side of Bourke Street between William and Queen streets. Constructed in 1966-68 to a design by Peddle Thorp & Walker, with Meldrum & Partners as local supervising architects, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The Former Dalgety House is a T-shaped building with broad frontage to Bourke Street which is set back approximately 6.5 metres behind a small raised plaza area. The building comprises a plant room at roof level and a basement carpark which is accessed from Bourke Street (via Michael Lane) at the eastern boundary of the site, and from the rear (via Little Collins Street and Normanby Lane) which leads to the rear of the building, at the western side.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction with articulated facades to the north and west which are grid-like in appearance. These facades are fully glazed with rows of rectangular aluminium-framed windows alternating with precast concrete spandrels, possibly clad with opaque brown glass.

These rows are set between thin protruding piers which ascend continuously from a street level arcade to the crown of the building and appear to be clad with vertically ribbed metal sheeting. Six piers divide the front façade into five bays, with matching piers at the corners of the building. The resulting dominant verticality is accentuated by continuous mullions which clearly divide the rows of windows and spandrels into vertical bays between piers, and the absence of a parapet line to provide termination to the vertical elements.

At street level the form of the raised entrance plaza has been retained, however modifications include reconfigured stairs and retaining walls and the addition of a glazed canopy. The form of the double-height building podium has also been retained, however columns and fascias have been reclad and shops inserted with fully glazed shopfronts. The continuous podium fascia has obscured the original individual fascia sections which spanned between the podium piers and continued the vertical emphasis of the design scheme.

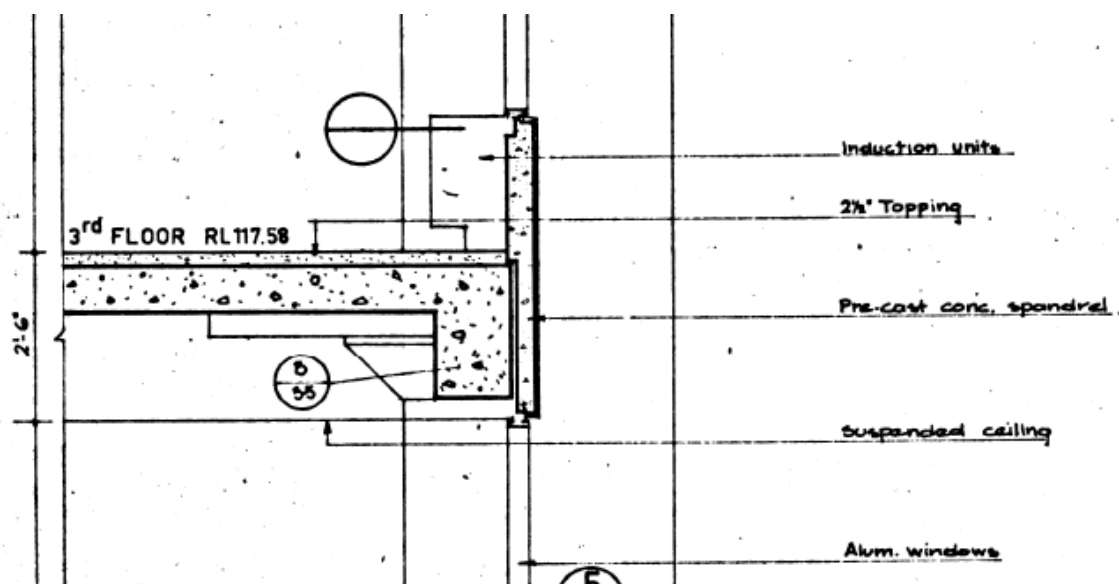


Figure 9. Drawing 38528-48, Building Application Plan, showing pre-cast concrete spandrel (BAP).

## INTEGRITY

The Former Dalgety House, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1966-68. Works to the building at street level have altered the original design of this frontage.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Dalgety House at 457-471 Bourke Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's two grid-like curtain walls (front and west side) of dominant vertical mullions and piers, and rows of aluminium framed glazing and opaque brown glass spandrels, can be clearly observed from Bourke Street and Michael Lane. Despite the redesign of the street-level facade, the upper facades of the Former Dalgety House remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Dalgety House. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:





Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)





Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Office Building, 178-188 Collins Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)





Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

### **Analysis**

As a fine and highly intact representative example of Post-War Modernist commercial building, the Former Dalgety House at 457-471 Bourke Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey office buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1960s to mid-1970s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a number of other examples identified above – the Former Dalgety House clearly demonstrates this class of place.



## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Australian Institute of Architects (AIA), Victorian Chapter, *Register of Notable 20<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture*, Victoria's State List, <[https://dynamic.architecture.com.au/i-cms\\_file?page=4048/VicRegister08.xls.pdf](https://dynamic.architecture.com.au/i-cms_file?page=4048/VicRegister08.xls.pdf)>, accessed October 2019.

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## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** D

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** Ungraded

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**Review of Heritage  
Overlay Listings in the  
CBD 2002** Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Dalgety House



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1966-68.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level frontage are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Former Dalgety House at 457-471 Bourke Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1966-68 to a design by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners, the Former Dalgety House has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former Dalgety House is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as an 18-storey building, the Former Dalgety House clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s structure, including two



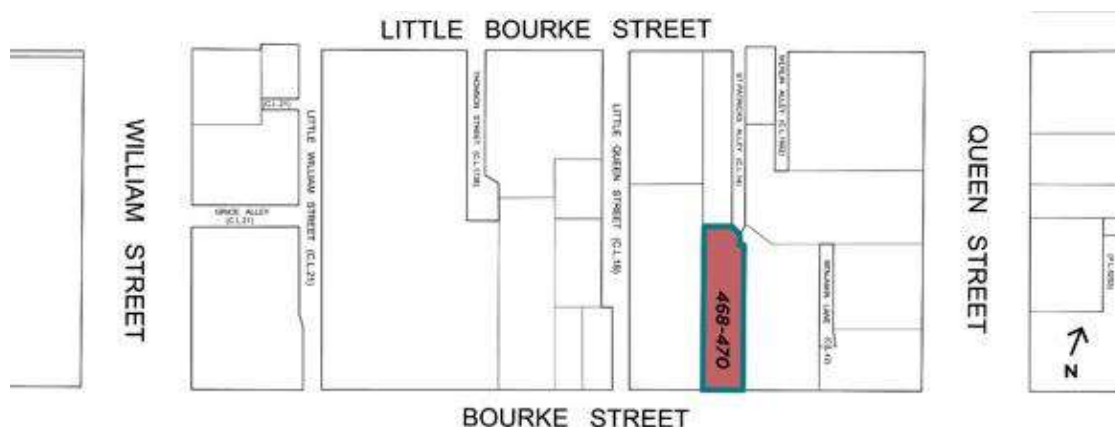
adjacent grid-like curtain walls (front and west sides) of dominant vertical mullions and piers with rows of aluminium framed glazing and opaque brown glass spandrels, as well as the use of materials such as opaque glass and aluminium cladding and window frames. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

**Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)

<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former London Assurance House [also known as Law Institute of Victoria]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	468-470 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101181



SURVEY DATE: May 2017

SURVEY BY: Context

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	Yes – interim controls HO1006
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Bernard Evans	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	B
		<b>BUILDER:</b>	Not known
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1965)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1960

**THEMES**

<b>ABORIGINAL THEMES</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
<b>POSTWAR THEMES</b>	<b>DOMINANT SUB-THEMES</b>
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

**LAND USE**

<b>THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE</b>	
1890s	St Patrick's Hall
1920s	St Patrick's Hall
1960s	Office (insurance)

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

**SUMMARY**

The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street, now the Law Institute of Australia, is a postwar curtain wall office building completed in 1960. It occupies the site of the former St Patrick's Hall which housed the first sitting of the Victorian Parliament in 1851.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

### **SITE HISTORY**

The Crown Record Plan notes that the site at which 468-470 Bourke Street is located was owned by Henry Elmes, later purchased by the St Patrick's Society in 1846.

*One of Melbourne's first halls, St Patrick's Hall was designed by Samuel Jackson and built on land purchased by the St Patrick's Society in 1846 at 85 (470) Bourke Street West. Dedicated 'to the memory of Ireland', it opened in 1849 for meetings and as a school for Irish children.*

*Victoria's Legislative Council met there from 13 November 1851 until the construction of the new Parliament House in 1856. For many years a mustering point for the annual St Patrick's Day procession and the Druids' Easter procession, the hall was demolished in 1957. Its original Speaker's chair is now displayed in Queen's Hall (eMelbourne, Andrew May, accessed 20 Jun 2017).*



St Patrick's Hall was replaced by the London Assurance Building in mid-1957. Estimated to cost £300,000, the new building was designed by architect Sir Bernard Evans, who employed a highly successful glass curtain wall in its design (Figure 1).

The professional journal *Architecture and Arts* reported on the new building, observing that it was located on the site of St Patrick's Hall where the first Victorian parliament met in 1851: a bronze commemoration plaque was retained on the site. They also noted that the London Assurance company had been operating since it received its Royal Charter from King George I in 1720.

In 1965, the periodical *Building Ideas* published a special edition for the Fourteenth Australian Architectural Convention to display the City's architectural wealth, with tour guides compiled by architect and academic, Neville Quarry, and others. London Assurance House was listed among the showcase of modern and heritage architecture in the guide to Melbourne's best architecture. London Assurance House was constructed during a time of major development in buildings for insurance or assurance in the city centre, which cemented Melbourne's pre-eminent role as a place for financial institutions.



Figure 1. 468-470 Bourke Street in 1959. (Source: Sievers 1959, SLV H2003.100/219 [copyright](#))

#### *Bernard Evans, architect*

Bernard Evans (1905-1981) was an architect, builder and civic leader. Born in Manchester, his family emigrated to Australia in 1913 and Bernard worked for his father as a designer and builder. He studied at the Working Man's College (now RMIT University) and established Premier Building Company in 1928. His expansive career spanned a period as Melbourne City Councillor (1949-1973), Lord Mayor (1959, 1960) and work on flats and public housing. His work in the 1950s and 60s was concerned with office buildings and the Emerald Hill Court Estate in South Melbourne. His impressive Ampol House (1958) with the spiral staircase at the corner of Grattan Street and Elizabeth Street was demolished in 2012.

Evans campaigned for the removal of the 132-foot height limit (40 metre) for buildings in the city centre. His architectural firm of Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking Pty Ltd was disbanded in 1975 following Evans' resignation in 1971. (Goad & Willis eds., 2012: 237-8).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

An aluminium and glass curtain wall is set back within the building's façade to create a picture frame effect, bordered by stone facing to the perimeter frame. Slim black-framed hopper-sash windows open from alternate midpoints of the window glazing. By contrast, the curtain's frame is natural aluminium. The much-favoured mushroom colour was applied to the spandrel glass (since modified with panels of a bold vertical contrasting stripe).

Goad notes that

*It displays the scale and modulation that enabled such generously glazed buildings to fit comfortably within Melbourne's 19th century structure while being clad in the latest building materials (Goad 1999).*

The new building was modern in its design, utilising light-weight building techniques such as open web floor beams protected by vermiculite.

Completing the illusion of total transparency central to modernism, an almost mullion-less glazed entry screen fills the whole gap left by the structure. A miniature replica of the building's structural casing surrounds two pivoted, slimly framed glass doors central to the entrance; completing the symmetry and simplicity of the façade.

One upper level was reserved for car parking accessed from the rear. Modern elevators were installed and despite the hopper sashes on the façade, all floors were airconditioned by a high velocity medium pressure double duct system. The entrance attracted attention with its travertine faced walls, green marble insets, gold ceramic tile panels, and marble stairs and floors. It also had an illuminated ceiling that was then a very new concept, and now removed. The service core ran down the east side of the building.

## INTEGRITY

A 1959 photograph of the building shows that there has only minor changes to its existing form, with the removal of the building name from the first level fascia and the added coloured spandrels beneath the windows as the only major differences.

The ground level interior is relatively well preserved and the exterior is generally original. Internal foyer finishes also appear to be early or original, including the white marble stairs and the travertine marble walls.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of multi-storey commercial buildings designed in the 1950s.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were designed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former London Assurance House. These are detailed below.

## State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

## Locally-significant places

### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those designed in the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

### *Other Examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).





Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).



### **Analysis**

The former London Assurance House has maintained a relatively high level of integrity when compared with other examples from this typology. It is highly representative of the period of postwar modern office buildings using curtain wall glazing, and is comparable to other central Melbourne examples such as 376-378 Bourke Street and 276-278 Collins Street (recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review). Whilst not the earliest, it is a fine example and somewhat unusual with the hopper sashes and the streamlined ground floor glazing.

## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
✓	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Goad, P 1999, *Melbourne Architecture*.

Goad, P & Willis, J (eds.) 2012, *An Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press

National Trust Classification Report

Sievers, Wolfgang 1959, '[London Assurance House], Bourke St. South side between Queen & William Streets', State Library of Victoria: Wolfgang Sievers collection, accessed online June 2019.

The following sources and data were used for this assessment (Graeme Butler, 2011). Note that the citation prepared in 2011 did not provide in text referencing.

### *General sources*

Historic Buildings Preservation Council reports on the Melbourne Central Business District from the 1970s;

Melbourne City Council on-line i-Heritage database;

Mahlstedt fire insurance map series held in the State Library of Victoria collection and Melbourne University Archives;

Daily newspaper reports such as 'The Argus';

Australian Architecture Index (AAI), prepared by Professor Miles Lewis and others;

Melbourne City Council building application drawings and files held at Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Public Records Office.

Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects

Graeme Butler, 1982-3, Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects: cites Neville Quarry, 'building ideas' (monthly published by CSR Building Materials Vol. 2, No. 11, March 1965, pp 2-26 March 1965, pp 2-26: Building 100 guide for Architectural Convention; Building Permit Applications 7/8/1957, 31434; 1/6/1959, 33368 (partitions at £1300); 'Architecture and the Arts', (Melbourne periodical) 4/1959: 35

### *Other sources*

Law institute web site 2010

<http://www.liv.asn.au/News-and-Publications/Law-Institute-Journal/Archived-Issues/LIJ-March-2009/LIVCelebrating-150-years> (Law Institute).

Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories

Where required directory extracts were obtained chiefly from Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories dating from the 1850s to 1974.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES GRADINGS

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	B
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<b>Central City Heritage Study Review 1993</b>	B
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<b>Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002</b>	B
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	B
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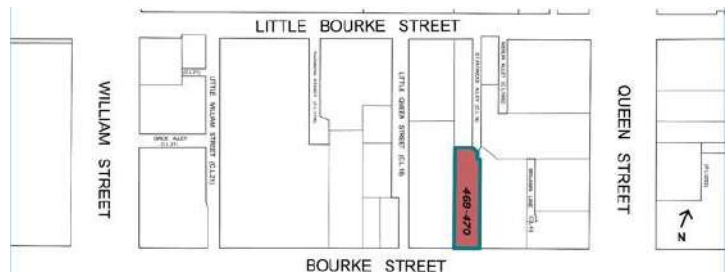


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former London Assurance House



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street, Melbourne; now the Law Institute of Victoria, completed in 1960 and designed by architect, developer, former Melbourne City Councillor and Mayor, Bernard Evans.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

468-470 Bourke Street is historically significant as the original location of St Patrick's Hall of 1849, which was built on land purchased by the St Patrick's Society in 1846. In 1851 the hall was the first meeting place of the Victorian Parliament.

The former London Assurance House, now the Law Institute of Victoria, is historically significant for its association with the rapid growth of the insurance and assurance industry in the 1950s-1960s. These companies used new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment, contributing to Melbourne's pre-eminent role as the preferred Australian location for large financial institutions.

The former London Assurance House is historically significant for its association with Bernard Evans; architect, Melbourne City Councillor (1949-73) and former Lord Mayor (1959-60). It is one of many city buildings designed by Evans in his long career as a city developer, architect and principal of the architectural practice Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking Pty Ltd. (Criterion A)

The former London Assurance House is significant as a highly intact, curtain-walled office building from the postwar period demonstrating the style embraced by local architects by the late 1950s. In particular it employs a curtain-wall façade that creates bold contrasts between the clear glazing and solid spandrels. (Criterion D)

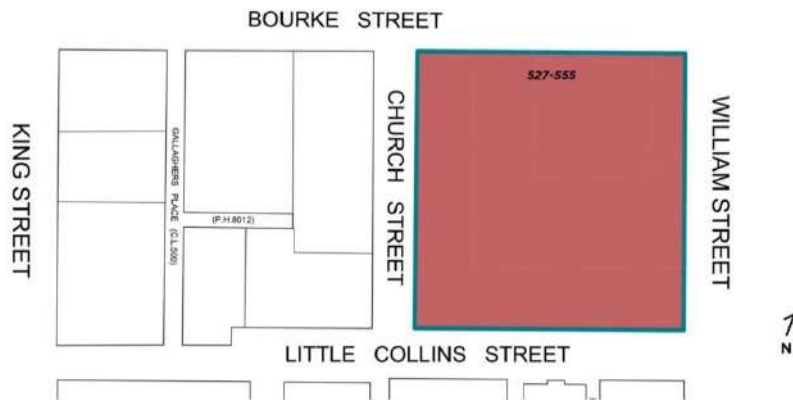
The former London Assurance House is aesthetically significant for its ground floor entry glazing designed as a replica of the 'picture frame' in stone facing that surrounds the whole building. The curtain wall is unusual in its design with the horizontal rectangular windows placed across the façade. Whilst some glazing panels have been replaced, the overall pattern of the façade has been retained. It is aesthetically significant for its lightness of structure, elegant transparency and curtain wall glazing of unusual pattern. The building has been identified by at least two key architectural publications including *Architecture and Arts* and in Melbourne's best architecture guide of 1965. (Criterion E)

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**Primary source**

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)

<b>SITE NAME</b>	AMP Tower and St James Building Complex
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	527-555 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101155



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	No
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Ungraded
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon	<b>BUILDER:</b>	E A Watts Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1965-1969



## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the post-war history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office, Hall, Carrier
1920s	Office, Merchant, Education, Workshop
1960s	Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Office, Retail, Studio

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The AMP Tower, the St James Building, and the associated public plaza were designed by the international architectural firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill, in association with the prominent Melbourne firm Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the latter also serving as the structural, mechanical and electrical engineers. The commercial complex was constructed in 1965-69, by builders E A Watts Pty Ltd.



## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

The AMP Tower, the St James Building, and the associated public plaza were designed by the international architectural firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill, in association with the prominent Melbourne firm Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the latter also serving as the structural, mechanical and electrical engineers. The commercial complex was constructed in 1965-69, by builders E A Watts Pty Ltd (Goad et al. 1993; *Cross-Section*, Dec 1969; *Architect*, May/Jun 1970:13).

The AMP Tower forms part of a collection of postwar high-rise buildings at the intersection of Bourke and William streets, which originally included the AMP Tower, BHP House, ACI House and Shell House (the last demolished in the 1980s) (Goad 2001: 270-271). A contemporary article published in 1970 (*Architect* May/Jun 1970:14) commented that each building was a:

*...careful exercise in the modern classical style. Taken together, the same classic principles should help to bring them into a coherent group. The variations, however, prove to be a powerful disruptive force. The result is merely a further contribution to Melbourne's visual chaos (Architect May/Jun 1970:14).*

The site was formerly occupied by St James School (associated with St James Cathedral adjacent; Melbourne's earliest surviving church, which was relocated to the corner of King and Batman streets), St James Street and St James Buildings (1889). The two-acre site was acquired from the Anglican Church by the AMP Society in 1963 (Goad et al. 1993; NTAV: VHD; *Cross-Section* Mar 1963:2).

While the architectural drawings (Figure 1 - Figure 3, Figure 5) note that Bates Smart & McCutcheon were the architects and engineers and Skidmore Owings & Merrill were the consulting architects, contemporary publications reported that Skidmore Owings & Merrill were the leading design firm. The San Francisco office of Skidmore Owings & Merrill were appointed in 1963 and carried out a three stage process comprising a programme, schematic design and design development. All documentation past the design development stage and supervision of construction was the responsibility of Bates Smart & McCutcheon, with Skidmore Owings and Merrill acting as consultants. The designers in the San Francisco office were Chuck Bassett, Richard Foster and Mark Goldstein, with Helmut Jacoby responsible for the perspective drawings (Goad 2004b:198).

Goad et al. (1993) noted that the design was informed by the precedent of Eero Saarinen's CBS Tower in New York (1962-64). The AMP Tower was designed to accommodate the client's needs and future expansion, while the St James Building was designed for tenancies on lease, with shops at the plaza level and five floors of office space above (*Architect*, May/Jun 1970:13). The entire site below ground level was designed to provide a car park and staff amenities, including a 248-seat theatre, cafeteria for 290 people, an executive dining room for 80 people, a gymnasium, squash court and games room (*Architect*, May/Jun 1970:13). The inclusion of the plaza was an important design aspect of the overall composition (Goad et al. 1993; Taylor & Stewart 2001:270).

The AMP Tower was a concrete encased steel post and beam construction, while the St James Building was a reinforced concrete beam and slab construction, 'complicated by torsional stresses induced by the angled colonnade' (*Architect*, May/Jun 1970:13). Both were finished externally with polished panels of reconstructed granite, and bronze-tinted glass in anodised aluminum frames (Goad et al. 1993; Taylor & Stewart 2001:270; *Architect*, May/Jun 1970:13). An advertisement in a 1974 architectural journal noted that the AMP Tower was clad with 'reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall units' (AIA, Nov/Dec 1974:8). The mullions on the face of the AMP Tower were used as vertical droppers for the dual-duct air conditions system (*Architect*, May/Jun 1970:13). The top level of the St James Building originally had copper cladding to the exterior (BAP).

Artist Clement Meadmore was commissioned to create a sculpture for the plaza, 'Awakening' (created in 1968; Figure 10 & Figure 11), a 'massive bent box of Corten steel' (Goad et al. 1993) (removed in 2010). Meadmore (1929-2005) earned international fame for his sculptures, many of which were designed for public spaces in Australia and the USA (DAOO; Clement Meadmore; *Architect* May/Jun 1970:14). Artist Michael Young received the commission for a stainless steel sculpture for the foyer of the St James Building. The two sculptures were 'important examples of the uncompromisingly minimalist expression of art of the late 1960s' (Goad et al. 1993).

The complex was the first project to enclose space with a mix of high and low-rise buildings in the central activity district (Goad et al. 1993). The AMP Tower, rising 26 storeys to 372 feet above plaza level, was temporarily Melbourne's tallest building, until 1972 (*Architect*, May/Jun 1970:13; CoMMaps). The total cost of the project was \$20,000,000 (Goad et al. 1993; Taylor & Stewart 2001:270).

The project prompted discussion in the architectural world at the time. The publication *Architect* discussed the complex in 1969 (May/Jun 1969:12):

*The design, nevertheless, is pure S.O.M. [Skidmore Owings and Merrill] and it is as clever as to be expected. A low L-shaped block is the minor of the two elements. It exploits to good effect two fashionable devices: the light-angle set-back in section, and the 45-degree*

*diagonal line in plan. It hugs the two back streets of the island block and makes a handsome background and foil to the major element: a strong, straight, square tower on the corner of the intersection.*

*Architect* further discussed the project in their May/June edition in 1970 (p13):

*The complex is monumental; but it is ivy-league monumental masonry, a premature gravestone marking the last resting place of a far-from-moribund financial giant. The resulting image is "hyper-real", belonging to another, sinister, space-time continuum, parallel but not identical with our own. This quality of other-worldliness is becoming more commonplace in the architecture of U.S.A. ...*

*The external surfaces of both the A.M.P. Tower and the St. James building consist mainly of glass and reconstructed granite. The finish is perfectly smooth and highly polished, so that the buildings appear to be carved out of monoliths, rather than as sets of joined elements.*

The 1970 article continues to comment on the dynamic design of the sloping walls of St James and their interplay with the plaza space.

The Melbourne University publication *Cross-Section* published articles with images in 1969 and 1970 (Figure 11). The January 1970 issue of *Cross-Section* (Jan 1970) noted:

*... the most outstanding visible feature is the unusual angled façade to the St James building. This is sloped away from the tower block to permit maximum sunlight to the plaza and lower floors. It is also angled 45° towards Bourke and William Streets to provide maximum daylight in offices ... The whole of the façade of both buildings is faced in reconstructed granite slabs up to 30' high and 4' wide. Contracts were let to two suppliers to provide the 305,000 square feet of cladding required. To ensure uniformity of colour from both suppliers a new granite quarry was opened at Mudgee in N.S.W. ... It is apparent that a great deal of thought has gone into the selection of both exterior and interior finishes to achieve an effective balance of two major requirements – beauty and ease of maintenance. Reconstructed granite, anodized aluminium and blue stone paving are used extensively on the outside while marble, stainless steel and vinyl wall coverings are featured internally.*

In 1972, *Architect* published the following (Mar/Apr 1972:17):

*...the complex is a simple massing that is one of several possible solutions to the planar and volumetric requirements of the client and the various controlling government bodies. Granted that, is very little more. The sole attempt to avoid banality within the buildings themselves, seem to lie in the external faceting of the columns, and in the splayed and angled colonnade.*

A low-scale addition has more recently been constructed off the AMP Tower providing for shopfronts, and the plaza partially infilled in 2012-13 (NTAV 2014:70). The St James Building was refurbished c2014 by Metier 3 Architects, which included a vertical addition (CoMMaps).



**Skidmore Owings & Merrill**

Skidmore Owings & Merrill is a US-based firm, established in Chicago in 1936 by architects Louis Skidmore and Nathaniel Owings, with engineer William Merrill joining the practice in 1939. It grew to become one of the largest architectural practices in the US and in the 1950s was particularly admired for its expertise in curtain wall construction.

Skidmore Owings & Merrill has collaborated with a number of Australian practices since its establishment. In the 1960s, the firm worked with Buchan, Laird and Buchan on the design of Shell House on the corner of Bourke and William streets (1960, demolished), with Bates Smart & McCutcheon on the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex at the corner of Bourke and William streets (1965-69), and with Yuncken Freeman on BHP House, 140 William Street (1967-73) (Goad 2012:631).

Skidmore Owings & Merrill remains one of the largest architectural, interior design, engineering and urban planning firms in the world, with offices in New York, San Francisco, LA, Washington DC, Seattle, London, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Dubai and Mumbai.

**Bates Smart & McCutcheon**

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon was formed when Osborn McCutcheon joined the existing firm of Bates & Smart in 1926. Bates & Smart had itself been born out of previous iterations of a firm that could be traced back to Reed & Barnes, making it one of the oldest practices in the country (Goad 2012:72). By the 1960s the firm had become one of Australia's largest architectural firms. It exists today as Bates Smart (Goad 2012:72).

During the 1930s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had earned a reputation for designing Georgian-style residences, but also went on to win RVIA awards for their work on the AMP Building in Collins Street (1926-31), Buckley & Nunn Building in Bourke Street (now David Jones, 1933), and the Second Church of Christ Scientist in Camberwell (1936-37).

By the 1950s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had become Australia's 'expert' in high-rise office buildings design (Goad 2012:73). Much of their work at this time was large structures with glass curtain walls. In Melbourne this was exemplified by ICI House, which broke the city's existing 132-foot (40m) height limit in 1955-8 (Goad 2012:73). Other work completed by the firm in the 1950s included the first of the Sleigh Buildings at 158-172 Queen Street Melbourne (1953-55 & 1964), Union House at 43-51 Queen Street Melbourne (1957) and the AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne (1956-58).

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon continued to expand into the 1960s and 70s, with its design approach shifting from glazed curtain walls to facades of artificial stone or prefabricated concrete panels. Works in Melbourne during this period included AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, Bourke Street (1965-69) in association with US firm, Skidmore Owings and Merrill; the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61); the South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street (1961-62) and the Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67) with F C Armstrong.

In the 1970s the firm designed the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne (c1972-75); the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73) and the double tower and plaza complex of Collins Place, Collins Street (1970-80), undertaken in collaboration with international architecture practice, I M Pei. Other notable works by the firm include the large collaborative designs of Melbourne Central with Kisho Kurokawa (1983-92) and Federation Square with Lab Architecture Studio (1997-2002) (Goad 2012:74).

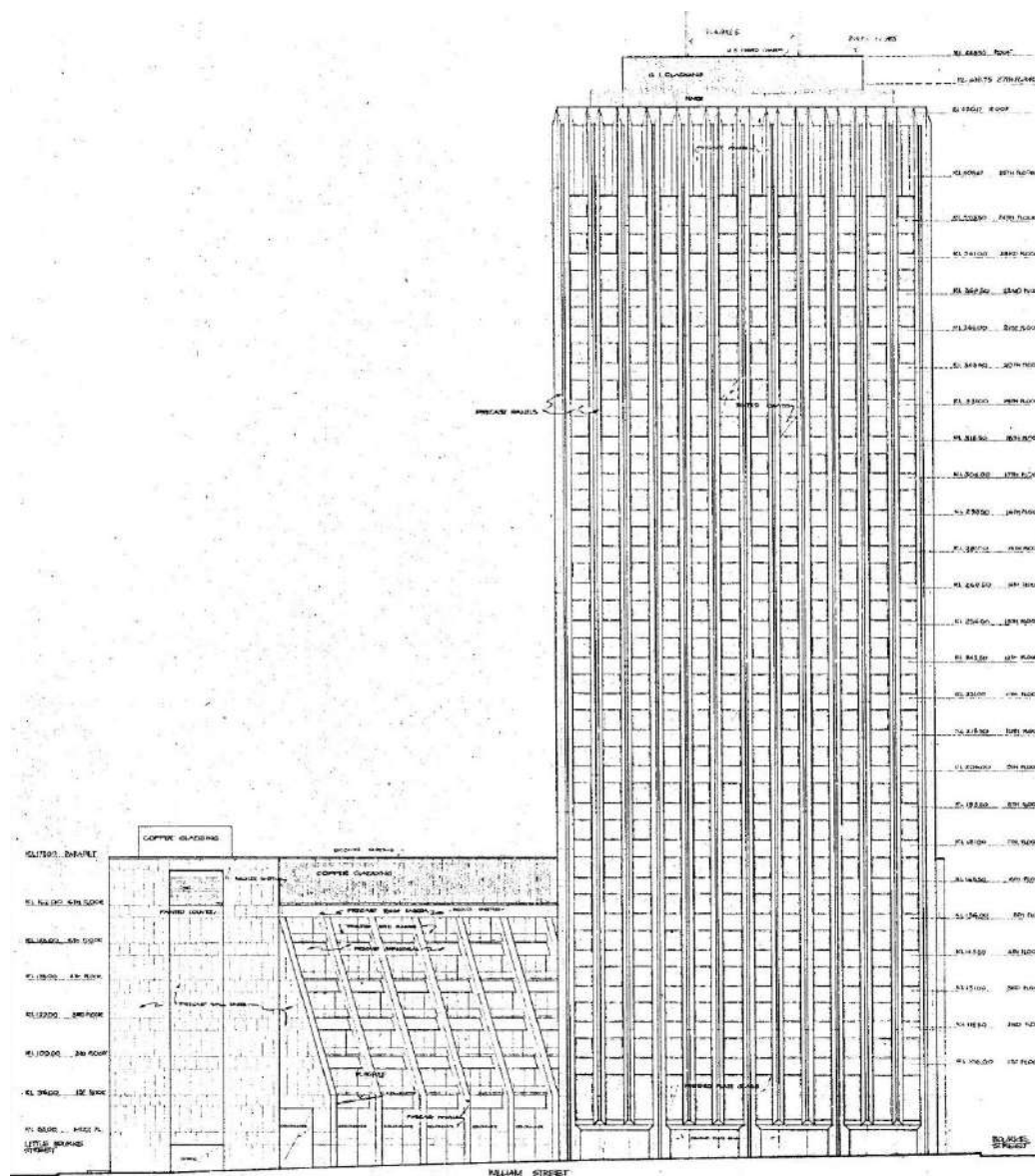


Figure 1. East elevation from William Street. Drawing by and Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated October 1965 (BAP).

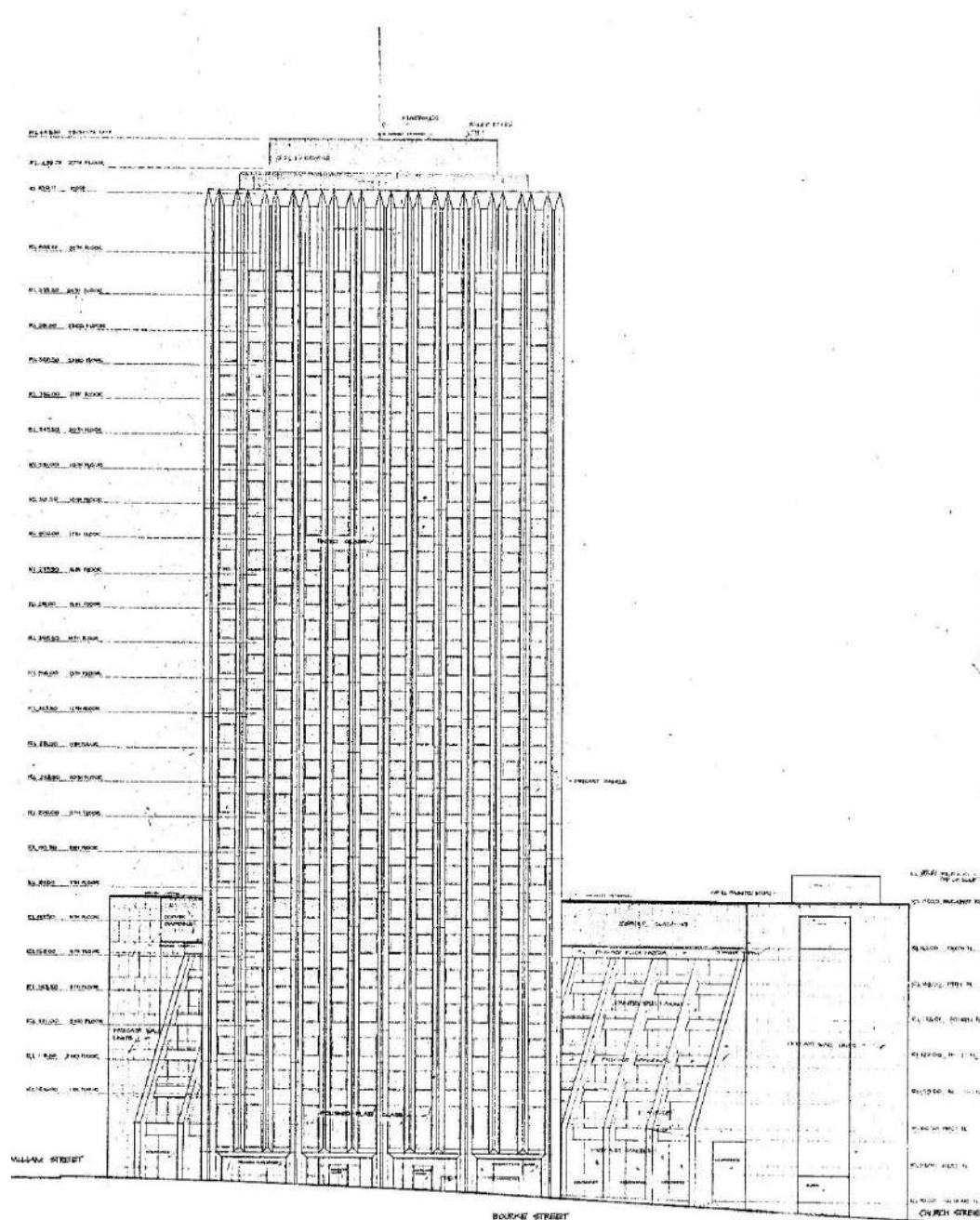


Figure 2. North elevation from Bourke Street. Drawing by and Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated October 1965 (BAP).



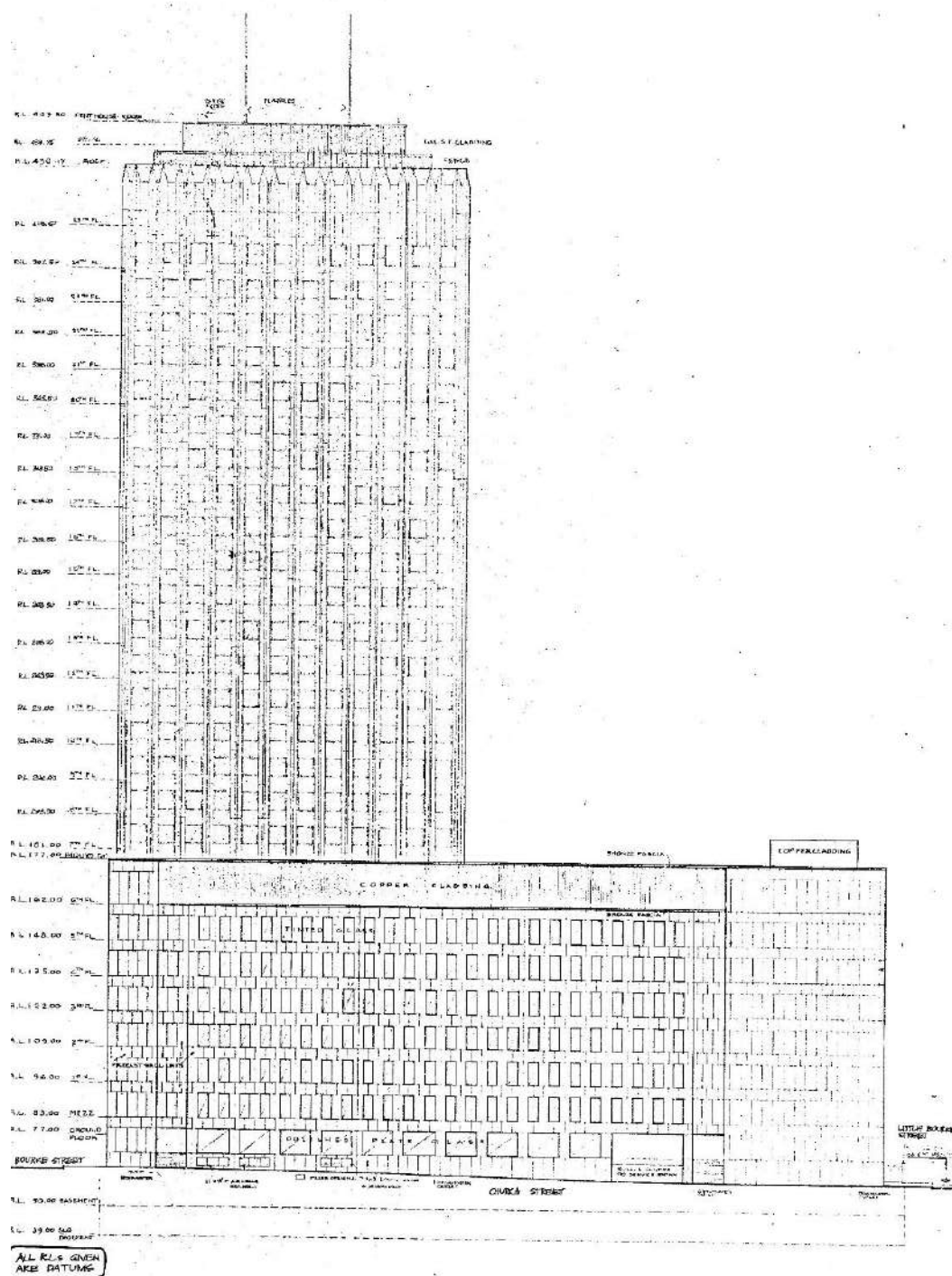


Figure 3. West elevation from Church Street. Drawing by and Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated October 1965 (BAP).



Figure 4. Illustration of the complex, viewed from William Street (Taylor & Stewart 2001:68).

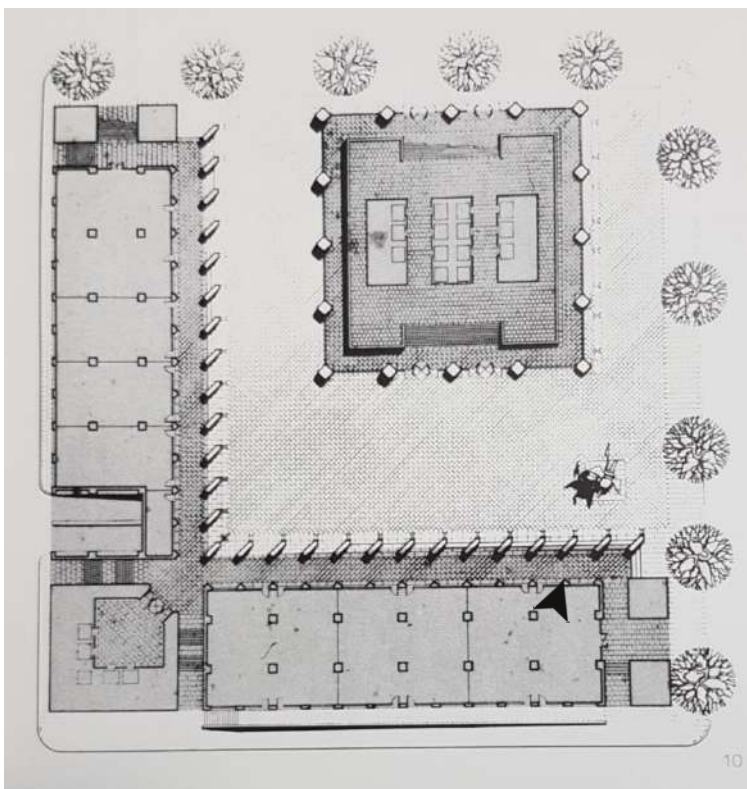


Figure 5. Site plan of the complex by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon (date not confirmed) (Taylor & Stewart 2001:68).



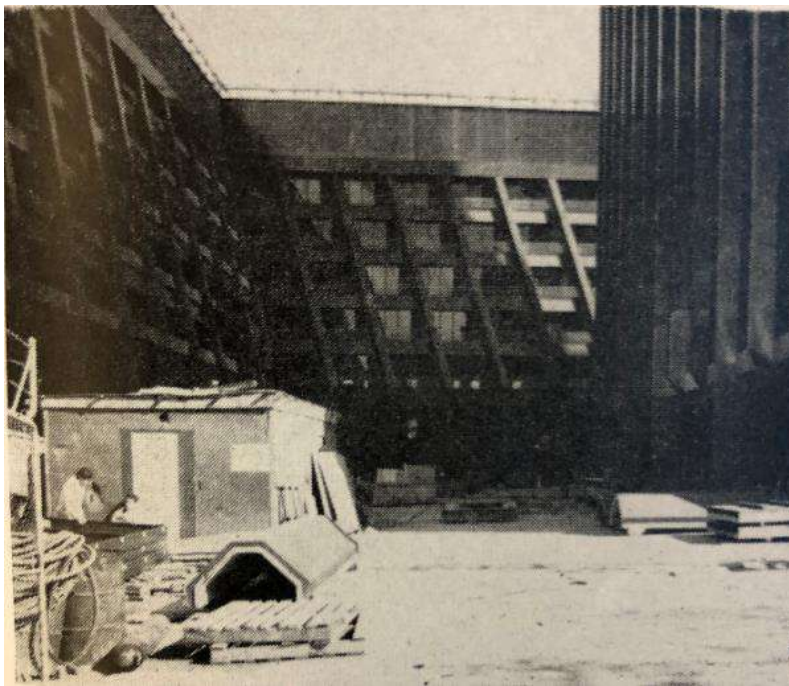


Figure 6. The buildings under construction, image published in the May/June 1969 edition of *Architect*.



Figure 7. The complex under construction in 1969 (NLA, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, object 160948487).



Figure 8. The AMP Tower under construction in 1969 (NLA, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, object 160948175).



Figure 9. Photo of the newly completed complex, published in the May/June 1970 edition of *Architect* (May/Jun 1970:12).



Figure 10. The complex and Meadmore sculpture; date of photo not confirmed (Taylor & Stewart 2001:68).



Figure 11. Detail of the St James building and Clement Meadmore's sculpture in the plaza. Photo published in January 1970 (*Cross-Section*, No. 206, 1 January 1970).





Figure 12. The complex in 1970 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/214).



Figure 13. The complex and Meadmore's sculpture in 1970 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/217).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex at 527-555 Bourke Street is a 26-storey commercial tower building and adjacent six-storey commercial building, set in a bluestone-paved urban plaza at the south-west corner of Bourke and William streets. Occupying half a city block, it is a substantial complex with tall tower at the intersection and low-scale L-shaped St James Building which wraps around the south and west sides of the tower. Constructed in 1965-69 to designs by American

architects Skidmore Owings and Merrill, in association with Melbourne architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the complex is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The tall AMP Tower is a free-standing building which provides the focus at the corner of the large 1.9 acres (.77 hectares) site. Square in plan with four identical grid-like facades, the tower is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with central service core providing lateral stability. In contrast, the low-scale L-shaped St James Building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction. Both buildings are clad with large reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall panels, with granite obtained from a new quarry opened for this purpose, and have bronze-tinted glazing in anodised aluminium frames.

The identical facades of the AMP Tower are grid-like in appearance with a dominant vertical emphasis provided by angled piers which are formed from precast concrete panels. Recessed behind these solid piers are alternating rows of precast concrete spandrels and windows which are divided into repetitive square units. The vertical piers rise to the top of the building, where a deep cornice is created by the addition of intermediary elements, formed from precast concrete panels.

Accentuated by double-height windows at first floor level, the base of the building was originally recessed behind a colonnade which was formed from the four angled corner piers and the continuation of three of the intermediate piers at each façade. Other piers terminate at first floor level with a chamfered edge. Despite some infill of the resulting colonnade, this arrangement is clearly visible at the north façade facing Bourke Street.

The L-shaped St James Building provides a background to the major tower element and encloses the site. The main facades of this building face north and east, towards the tower and into a paved plaza located between buildings. Secondary facades face Little Collins Street to the south and Church Street to the west and a service core is located at the junction of the two wings. The main facades appear as a complex grid of solid concrete elements with projecting piers which are angled at 45 degrees in plan from the main building. An additional light-angle set back of the plaza facades above ground level, incorporates cranked balustraded balconies.

Various modifications have been made to the two buildings and the plaza. These include:

- A two-storey glazed pavilion-like structure has been added at street-level to the east façade of the tower
- Single-storey glazed pavilion-like structures have been added to the main facades of the St James Building
- A substantial roof top addition has been made to the St James Building
- Shopfronts have been inserted in the ground floor colonnades of parts of the tower
- The western portion of the plaza has been covered with transparent roofing.

Parts of the original bluestone paving of the plaza may have been retained, however garden beds have been inserted, ramps have been installed, the original sculpture has been removed and additions to the buildings have reduced the amount of open area.

## **INTEGRITY**

The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the buildings above street level, remains largely intact to its original construction in 1965-69. Works to the building, including street level alterations and additions, and roof top additions to the



St James Building, have altered the original design. The overall form of the public plaza has been substantially retained.

Overall, the complex retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While it has undergone some alterations, these changes do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the buildings and their plaza setting as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Set on a large and prominent city site, the AMP Tower and St James Building Complex at 527-555 Bourke Street is a complex which comprises three important elements – a high-rise tower, a low-rise L-shaped horizontal block and an open plaza. The complex is a representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and the tower clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. In combination these elements form a rare example of a public space enclosed by a tower and perimeter block in the CBD.

This large-scale urban and architectural design was a major Melbourne landmark in the 1960s and was widely critiqued in contemporary architectural journals. The size and complexity of the development, the design of the two related buildings, the unusual provision of a large public plaza in association with office development (the corporate concern for open public space and public amenity within the city was commonly noted) and the association with the American architects Skidmore Owings and Merrill were all considered to be notable aspects of the development.

### *The Buildings*

The grid-like walls of the freestanding multi-storey AMP Tower, the innovative grid-like walls of the associated St James Building and the extensive use of reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete panels and bronze-tinted glazing in anodised aluminium frames, can be clearly observed from surrounding streets and from within the plaza itself. Despite additions and alterations made to the complex, the plan form of the complex and the upper facades of the buildings remain highly intact to illustrate the important period of construction of the buildings.

The AMP Tower itself can be compared with a number of multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne which were built in the same period and display similar characteristics. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



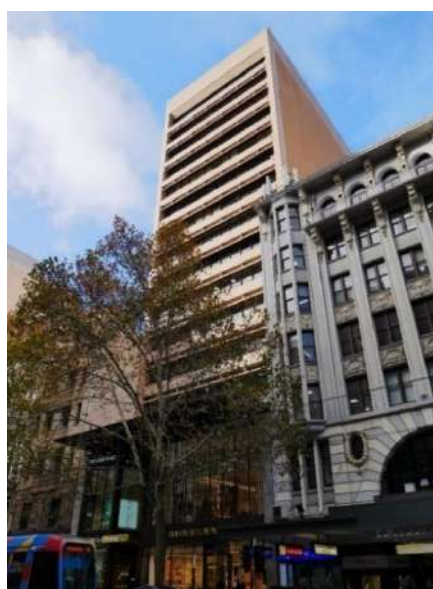
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)





Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)





Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)





Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

### Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of Post-War Modernist office building, the AMP Tower at 527-555 Bourke Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1960s to mid-1970s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a number of other examples identified above – the AMP Tower clearly demonstrates this class of place.

The associated low-rise St James Building is an integral part of the overall design of the complex and displays unusual architectural detailing that complements the AMP Tower.

### *The Public Plaza*

The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex was noted in 1993 as the ‘first project to enclose space with a mix of high and low rise in the CBD’ (Goad, Lewis, Mayne, Raworth & Turnbull ‘Central City Heritage Study Review’ 1993). The creation of large open plazas in association with postwar multi-storey building development was uncommon, although a number of multi-storey building

designs incorporated small plazas, usually to gain council approval for additional building height. These included the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner 1963) as well as later buildings such as the CBC of Sydney Bank, 251-57 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1968-73) and the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 363-71 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1972-75).

One of the first large public plazas associated with a free-standing tower was part of the National Mutual Centre, 435-55 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton & Lobb 1965). It was described in *Building Ideas* March 1965 as follows:

*The creation of a much needed open plaza in the heart of the office district was made possible by the City Council's move in buying the whole block and leasing it back to National Mutual with the requirement that only half the area should be built upon and the other half be paved and planted for the use of the public with parking underneath.*

Similarly the Southern Cross Hotel, 121 Exhibition Street (L M Perrott & Partners 1962) incorporated a public plaza in the design of the building. This was described in the March 1965 edition of *Building Ideas* as 'a desirable innovation in its outdoor plaza, surrounded on all sides by a two-level promenade of shops, with a fountain and seats at ground level'.

Both these buildings have been demolished and the former public plazas consumed by building development.

The form of the public plaza at the AMP Tower and St James Building Complex has been retained as the setting for the two buildings on the site and remains as a rare feature in within the Hoddle Grid. Despite additions made to the buildings, and the removal of the original sculpture, the plaza remains substantially intact to clearly demonstrate the original urban design concept of a bluestone-paved urban plaza in association with city office building development.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
✓	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
✓	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).



**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

- Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*
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- Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.
- City of Melbourne Maps (CoMMaps), Site Details.
- Clement Meadmore, <<http://www.meadmore.com/>>, accessed November 2019.
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- Design & Art Australia Online (DAOO), 'Clement Meadmore', <<https://www.daaao.org.au/bio/clement-meadmore/biography/>>, accessed November 2019.
- Goad, Philip, Miles Lewis, Alan Mayne, Bryce Raworth & Jeff Turnbull (1993), *Central City Heritage Study Review*, place citation.
- Goad, Philip, 'BHP House, Melbourne' in Taylor, Jennifer & Susan Stewart (2001), *Tall buildings : Australian business going up : 1945-1970*, Sydney [NSW], pp260-281.
- Goad, Philip, 'Becoming Bates Smart 1995-2003' in Goad, Philip & Bates Smart (Firm) (2004a), *Bates Smart : 150 years of Australian architecture*, Fishermans Bend [Vic], pp244-294.
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- Goad, Philip (2012), 'Skidmore Owings & Merrill' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne, pp 631-632.
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- National Library of Australia (NLA), images and photographers as cited.
- National Trust of Australia, Victoria (NTAV) (September 2014), *Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism, A Comparative Analysis of Post-War Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD 1955 -1975*.
- National Trust of Australia, Victoria: Victorian Heritage Database records (NTAV: VHD), <<https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/>>, accessed 3 July 2019:
- 'AMP Square - AMP Tower, St James Building, plaza & Clement Meadmore 'Awakening' Sculpture', 527-555 Bourke Street, Melbourne
- 'Former St James Buildings', 527-555 Bourke Street, Melbourne.
- State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, photographers and images as cited.
- Taylor, Jennifer & Susan Stewart (2001), *Tall buildings : Australian business going up : 1945-1970*, Sydney [NSW].

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	B
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 1993</b>	A
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<b>Review of Heritage Overlay Listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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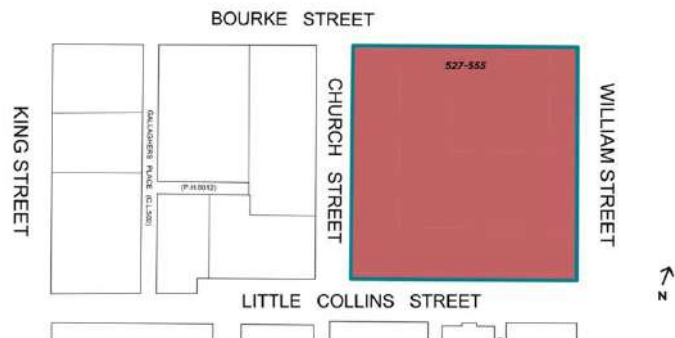
<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** AMP Tower and St James Building Complex

**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street, a multi-storey office building and plaza complex constructed in 1965-69.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The original external form, materials and detailing of both buildings
- The high level of integrity to the original design of both buildings
- The form of the public plaza.

Later alterations made to the street level facades of both buildings and the roof-top addition to the St James Building are not significant. The garden beds, ramped walkways and in-built furniture within the plaza are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex at 527-555 Bourke Street is of historical, rarity, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1965-69 to a design by Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the AMP Tower and St James Building Complex has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed –

was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The AMP Tower and St James Building are fine and intact representative examples of Post-War Modernist commercial buildings. Lead design by American architects Skidmore Owings & Merrill, the buildings strongly reflect the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid-1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 26-storey office tower on a prominent corner site, the freestanding AMP Tower clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid-1970s structure, including four identical grid-like walls formed from dominant vertical piers and repetitive square window and spandrel units, a podium base and deep crowning cornice, and the use of materials such as reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete panels, bronze-tinted glazing and anodised aluminium window frames. Utilising the same materials, the sloping and angled grid-like walls of the low-rise St James Building similarly demonstrate typical characteristics of a grid-like 1960s to mid-1970s structure. Despite alterations and additions made to the two buildings, the AMP Tower and St James Building clearly demonstrates the principle characteristics of a postwar multi-storey commercial complex (Criterion D).

The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex is a well-considered and carefully detailed example of a designed urban space in the Melbourne CBD. Widely discussed and illustrated in contemporary architectural journals during and after construction, the site – with prominent corner tower, L-shaped building which encloses the site and associated public plaza – presents as a well-designed and now rare urban space in the CBD. Despite alterations, including the removal of the original Clement Meadmore sculpture 'Awakening' from the plaza, the overall form of the original 1960s urban space can be understood and appreciated (Criterion B & Criterion E).

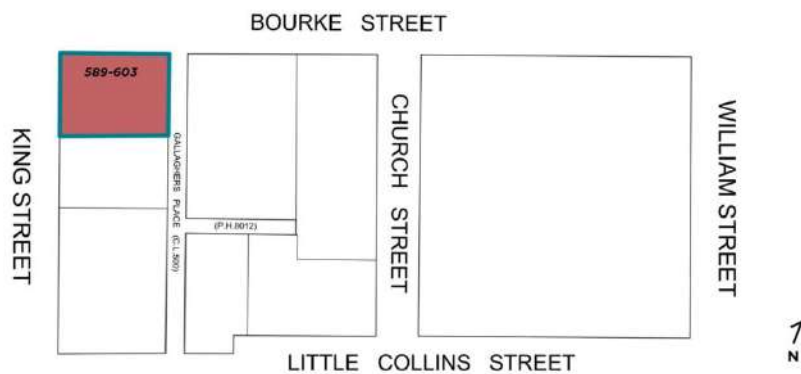
#### Primary source

Hoddle	Grid	Heritage	Review	(Context	&	GJM	Heritage,	2020)
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<b>SITE NAME</b>	Office Building [also known as Allianz Centre (current name)]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	589-603 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	105390



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** No

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** Ungraded

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Peddle Thorp de Preu

**BUILDER:** Leighton Properties & The British Land Co. of Aust.

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1973-1975

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the post-war history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office, Hotel
1920s	Merchant, Office or Factory, Hotel
1960s	Workshop, Office, Café/Restaurant

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The corner office building at 589-603 Bourke Street was designed by architects and engineers, Peddle Thorp de Preu and constructed by Leighton Properties Pty Ltd with The British Land Co. of Aust. Pty Ltd in 1973-1975.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.



Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

The corner office building at 589-603 Bourke Street was designed by architects and engineers, Peddle Thorp de Preu (BAP) and constructed by Leighton Properties Pty Ltd with The British Land Co. of Aust. Pty Ltd (SLV, Image H99.50/384).

In February 1973, the City of Melbourne received a building permit application for an '11 storey office building' at 601 Bourke Street (estimated to cost \$2,650,000) (BAI). Construction commenced in April 1973 (SLV, Image H99.50/384).

Annotations to the 1972 drawings by Peddle Thorp de Preu (Figure 1 - Figure 3) indicate that the office building was designed with 'precast exposed scoria sandblasted aggregate units' and aluminium framed, centrally-pivoted, double-glazed windows. The external columns and colonnaded area to the ground floor were to have a 'bush hammered concrete finish' (BAP). Photos dating to 1974 show the construction of the corner building (Figure 4 & Figure 5). A 1975 photo of the newly completed building shows the original ground floor exterior (Figure 6).

In November 1975, 601 Bourke Street was advertised for tenants, the advertisement describing the '10 floors of quality office space' on the prominent corner, with an 'imposing entrance' and basement carpark (Age, 11 Nov 1975:22). The Forests Commission Victoria (later Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands) occupied 601 Bourke Street from c1978 (Age, 11 Feb 1978:105).

In 2019 the building is called the Allianz Centre (ComMaps).

**Peddle Thorp de Preu, architects**

The partnership of Peddle & Thorp was formed in 1914. From 1920 Frederick H E Walker (1900-1950) served his articles at the firm, before completing his studies, working in the United States and travelling. Walker re-joined the firm as partner in 1924, which established the firm Peddle, Thorp & Walker. Frank Thorp (1903-1968; George Thorp's younger brother) became the fourth partner in 1929. George Thorp travelled in 1953 and 1960 to review the latest overseas architectural developments and trends (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6).

From the 1950s, Peddle, Thorp & Walker asserted itself as a major Sydney Post War practice. The firm's design for AMP's Sydney headquarters on Phillip Street (1962) brought them international attention for designing the first skyscraper completed in Sydney (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6; Taylor 2001:58). The curved and glazed curtain wall tower broke the 150 foot (c45.75m) height limit and 'signalled a new era of skyscraper design and a race for height' (Goad & Higham 2012:536). The firm continued designing tall buildings in Sydney, including Sun Alliance House, Bridge Street (1964-65; demolished), Goldfields House, Pitt Street (1966), the Royal Exchange Building, Bridge Street (1967) and the ANZ Bank and Offices, Pitt Street (1972) (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6). In Melbourne, the firm designed Dalgety House at 457-471 Bourke Street (1966-68) and Australia-Netherlands House on Collins Street (c1968-70), both in association with Melbourne-based architects Meldrum & Partners.

The multi-storey office building at 589-603 Bourke Street, Melbourne (1973-75) was designed by the partnership of Peddle Thorp De Preu. Gerard de Preu was a Swiss-born architect who arrived in Sydney in 1949 (Sun 12 October 1950:33). Little is known about his early career in Australia. In the 1970s he partnered with Peddle Thorp before establishing his own practice, Gerard de Preu and Partners in South Yarra, Melbourne in 1980 (*Age*, 13 January 1971:38; Encyclopedia of Australian Science). The firm designed the Rialto Towers at 525 Collins Street (1982-86) in association with Perrott Lyon Mathieson. The Rialto was Australia's tallest building upon its completion in 1986. De Preu also designed the ACI Building, 200 Queen Street (1980s) and was involved in the proposed development of the Jolimont Railyards (*Age*, 24 June 1987:36). De Preu's practice continued to 2006, just three years prior to his death.

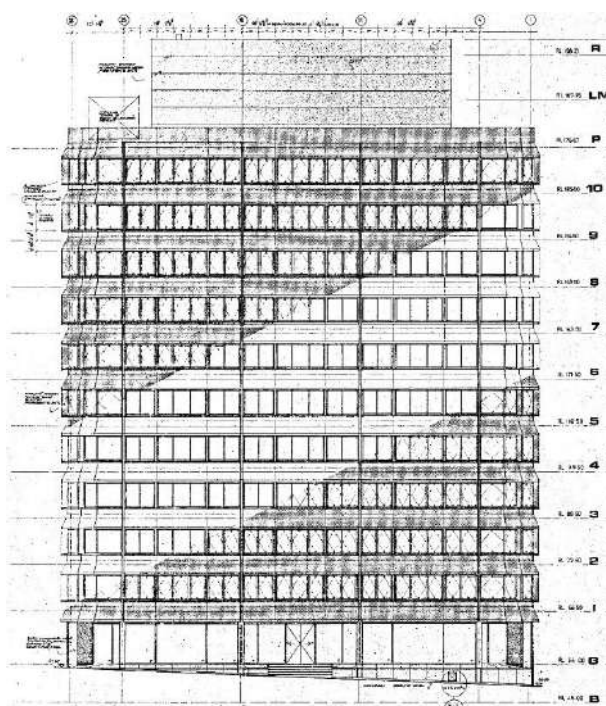


Figure 1. North elevation to Bourke Street. Drawing by Peddle Thorp de Preu, dated November 1972 (BAP).

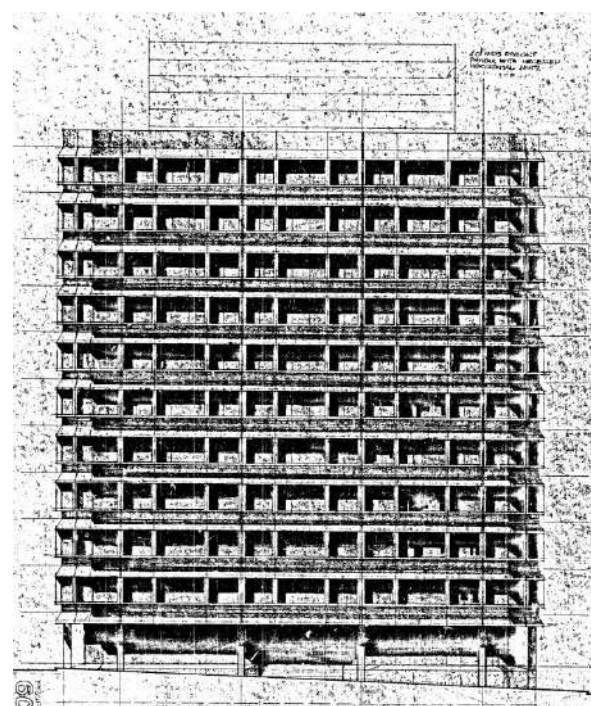


Figure 2. North elevation to Bourke Street. Drawing by Peddle Thorp de Preu, dated October 1972 (BAP).

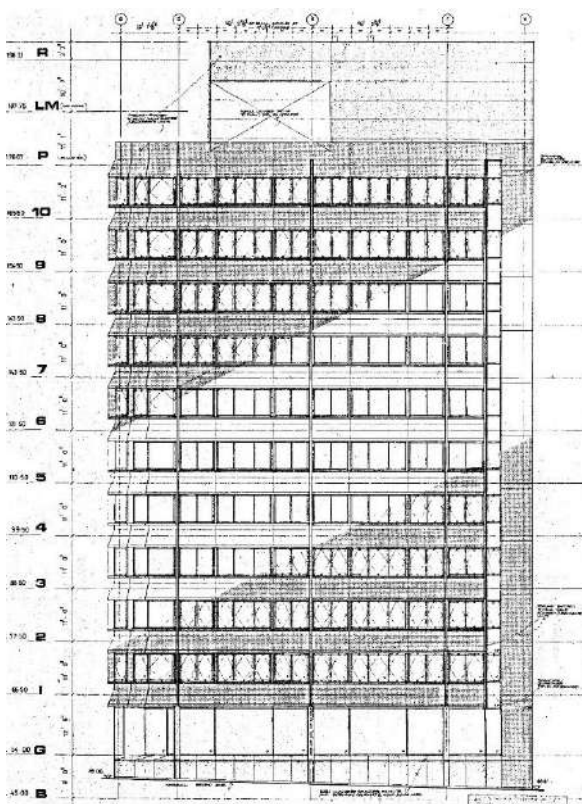


Figure 3. West elevation to King Street. Drawing by Peddle Thorp de Preu, dated November 1972 (BAP).





Figure 4. The corner building under construction in 1974 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/383).



Figure 5. The building under construction in 1974. The site board states that the office development was by Leighton Properties Pty Ltd with The British Land Co. of Aust. Pty Ltd, and that construction started in April 1973 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/384).



Figure 6. The newly completed office building in 1975, with the original exterior to the ground floor (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/385).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street, is a 10-storey (plus ground level) commercial building located on the south-east corner of Bourke Street and King Street. Constructed in 1973-75 to a design by architects Peddle Thorp de Preu, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building presents three identical facades to King Street, Bourke Street and Gallaghers Lane to the east. Visible above the adjacent low-scale building in King Street, the south façade is an unadorned wall of painted exposed brickwork infill to the concrete structure.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction which is clad with deep, highly modelled precast concrete wall panels with exposed, scoria sandblasted aggregate finish. Repeated across the three main facades, these wall panels form both sills and deep sunhoods for rows of façade windows. The vertical elements of these precast concrete units join to form mullions which divide the windows into bays, however the horizontal line clearly dominates the overall composition. Angled precast corner units create continuous horizontal lines which wrap around the three main facades and terminate at vertical bays, with narrow strips of windows, at the south end of the east and west facades. These bays clearly define the junction with the adjoining building and, together with a plain parapet, frame the overall building composition.

At street level, the building has been recently re-clad and re-glazed. Original architectural drawings indicate that a bush hammered concrete finish was to be applied to ground level external columns and surfaces and this is no longer visible. It appears that the access stairs from the footpath to the building entrance in Bourke Street have been retained.

## INTEGRITY

The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street, including the original form and detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original 1973-75 construction. Works at street level have altered the original design at the base of the building.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's three grid-like facades of complex three-dimensional precast concrete wall panels, which combine to create a strong horizontal emphasis and incorporate sunhoods to shade windows, can be clearly observed from King Street, Bourke Street and Gallaghers Lane. Despite modifications made to the building at street level, the upper facades of the building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the office building at 589-603 Bourke Street. These are detailed below.



### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:





Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)





Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street  
(Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street  
(Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street  
(B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey  
& Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street  
(unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street  
(Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)





Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)

**Analysis**

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, the office building at 589-603 Bourke Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to a number of 1960s to mid-1970s buildings listed above, the subject building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A



## REFERENCES

Context History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Building Application Index (BAI), City of Melbourne.

Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.

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Encyclopedia of Australia Science, 'Gerard de Preu and Partners (1980 – 2006)',  
<[www.eoas.info/biogs/A001073b.htm#pub-resources](http://www.eoas.info/biogs/A001073b.htm#pub-resources)>, accessed 10 December 2019.

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State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, images and photographers as cited.

*Sun* [Sydney, NSW].

*The Age*.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 1993</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Review of Heritage Overlay Listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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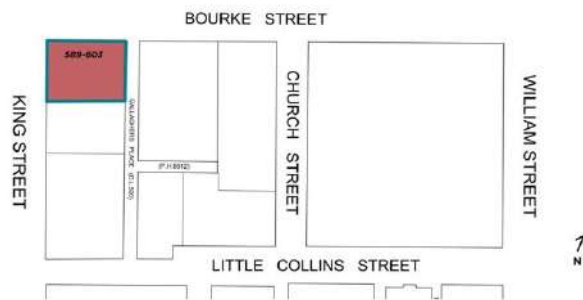
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Heritage Place: Office Building



PS ref no: HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street, a multi-storey commercial building constructed from 1973-75.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facades are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed from 1973-75 to a design by Peddle Thorp de Preu, the office building at 589-603 Bourke Street has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the architectural style popular from the

1960s to the mid-1970s, particularly in central Melbourne, and clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar structure including three grid-like facades of complex three-dimensional wall panels that combine to create a strong horizontal emphasis. The use of materials such as precast concrete and aluminium window frames, as well as the incorporation of sunhoods to shade windows, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

**Primary source**

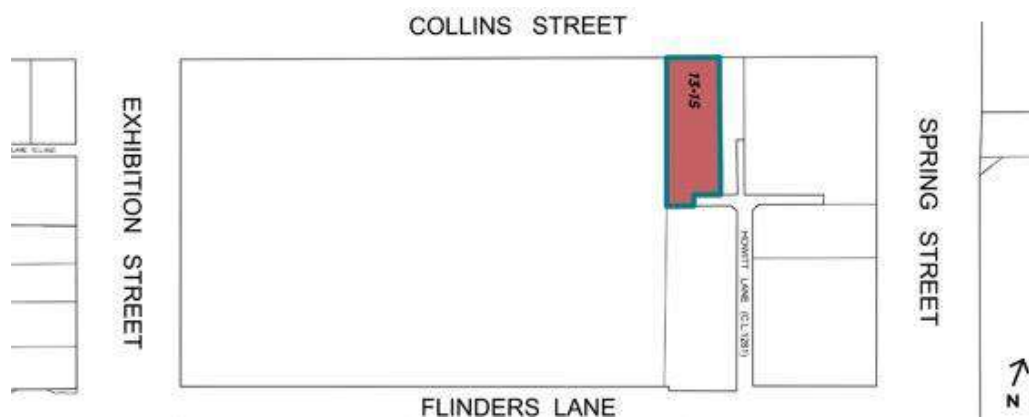
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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)





<b>SITE NAME</b>	Apartment Building
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	13-15 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102059



**SURVEY DATE:** November 2017

**SURVEY BY:** Context

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** N/A

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Kurt Popper

**FORMER CATEGORY** Significant

**BUILDER:** Not known

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1970

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall 1.11 Overseas influences
5 Living in the city centre	5.1 Housing and lodging

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Medical / residential
1920s	Medical / residential
1960s	Carpark/ residential

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

## SUMMARY

Designed by émigré architect Kurt Popper, this modern residential apartment is an example of a building type that emerged in Melbourne in the late 1960s/early 1970s. It is distinctly modernist in form and aesthetic, with a curtain walled façade that features a rhythmic arrangement of brown brick spandrels and masonry balconies.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

## Overseas influences

America was the strongest overseas influence on the post-World War II architecture of Australian capitals. Australian architects often studied in American universities or visited the USA on study tours. American advances in the manufacturing of steel and concrete were also adopted in Australia. While steel was the main material in North American skyscrapers, concrete was used more often in Australia, and often combined with high-strength steel (Marsden 2000:70-72).

Another influence on architectural design was émigré architects who arrived in Melbourne before and after World War II. The impact of postwar immigration on Australian cities can be described in three ways: the enlivening of city centres by the arrival of European and Asian immigrants into mainly Australian-born communities; the rapid increase in the size of capital cities; and the roles played by particular immigrant groups, especially in the fields of architecture, economies, politics and cultural activities (Marsden 2000:95-99). Architect Kurt Popper, who arrived in Melbourne from Vienna in 1940, developers Bruno and Rino Grollo (sons of an Italian immigrant), and Viennese immigrant Ted Lustig and his Israeli son-in-law Max Moar, have had a significant impact on Melbourne's city landscape through architecture and property development.

Émigré architects were often educated in progressive institutions where modernism was more advanced than in Australia. Their expertise and modernist designs gained recognition and were translated into the local context. Many were also involved with teaching at architectural schools and influenced the next generation of architects (Lozanovska & McKnight 2015:352-353). Examples in the city centre include the apartment buildings, Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970), both designed by Kurt Popper.

## Housing and lodging

The provision of accommodation has always been a major function of Australian city centres, and has included the establishment of hotels, hostels, boarding houses and serviced apartments, as well as terraces, flats and medium-density housing. Since the 1950s, the market sought by inner-city developers has moved to an almost exclusively middle- to higher-income group. New forms of accommodation from the 1950s replaced older buildings with high-cost, high-rise buildings for a restricted range of users (Marsden 2000:53).

The postwar era saw the introduction of apartments and flats in the well-established inner suburbs of South Yarra and St Kilda, spreading to Caulfield, Malvern, Camberwell, Hawthorn and Prahran. Victoria's first block of 'own-your-own' or 'OYO' flats were built in Hawthorn in 1949 and the subsequent introduction of strata title legislation by architect and Lord Mayor Bernard Evans led to the proliferation of this housing type from the early 1950s (Heritage Alliance 2008:23).

The apartment boom reached the inner city in the late 1960s, facilitated by the *Conveyancing (Strata Titles) Act* of 1961. An Australian innovation, the legislation allowed each lot or apartment to have its own title deed (Stent 2018). Many émigré architects, who were experienced in higher density living in Europe, specialised in apartment design. Viennese-born architect Kurt Popper, for example, built two blocks of residential flats in central Melbourne – Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970) (Heritage Alliance 2008:21).

Although marketed as a glamorous and convenient lifestyle, high-rise city apartment living was not popularly embraced. Exhibition Towers, an 11-storey residential building located at the north-west corner of Exhibition Street and Little Lonsdale Street, was designed and built as a residential and



commercial building. Constructed in 1968-69 to a design by Kenneth McDonald & Associates, the building was an endeavour to provide 'OYO' flats in the city centre. 'High prices, high bills and Melbourne's conservative living style' contributed to difficulties in finding buyers for the units and the building was converted to the Courtesy Inn Motel in 1971 (*Age* 17 February 1971:3). It was also reported in 1971 that Park Tower was using its tenants' car spaces as a public car park and the flats were being let on short-term leases. Similarly, the two-month-old 13-15 Collins Street apartments contemplated filling its lower four floors with shops, offices and medical practices (*Age* 17 February 1971:3, Figure 8).

In 1974, the MCC introduced a policy to encourage residents back to the city through the construction of a variety of residential typologies. However, because development was market driven, it was predominantly offices and retail spaces that were constructed in the city centre (Marsden 2000:54, 112).

## **SITE HISTORY**

13-15 Collins Street forms part of Crown Allotment 12, Section 8, originally purchased by Godfrey Howett (CoMMaps). Until 1945, the land was occupied for more than 70 years by the family of Dr Walter Gray. Dr Gray's house with doctors' rooms was one of Melbourne's oldest residential houses at that time (*Argus* 28 September 1945:6). By 1955, the land had been cleared by the then proprietor, the trustees of the Returned Servicemen's League, and used as a car park (*Argus* 18 January 1955:15).

In 1968, plans for a new \$2.25 million apartment building, '13-15 Collins Street', were drawn up by a group of Melbourne business people who had formed a company called No 13-15 Collins Street Pty Ltd (*Age* 17 November 1972:3). The managing agents of the project were Jones, Lang & Wootton (*Age* 15 May 1968:40). By May 1968 the excavations for the foundations of the building were completed, and tenders were invited around the same time (*Age* 15 May 1968:40).

Architects Roy Grounds & Co Pty Ltd were initially appointed to design the building, the first modern apartment tower on Collins Street. The firm, however, did not complete the project. The building was constructed to an amended design by émigré architect Kurt Popper who had completed two of the first modern residential buildings in Melbourne by that time, Crossley House at 47 Little Bourke Street and Park Tower at 201 Spring Street. Although the façade of 13-15 Collins Street was largely redesigned by Popper, the finished building showed some degree of continuity with Grounds' design, including the use of masonry and render, and the dynamic arrangement of asymmetric massing across the height of the façade (Figure 2, Figure 1) (*Age* 19 June 1970:45).

One of the main differences between the designs of the two architects was the provision of the ground-level plaza. In Popper's design, the first two storeys were on the street line while the upper-storey tower was set back from the street line, whereas, in Grounds' design, the whole tower was set at the street line. The height of the building was also reduced from 24 to 22 storeys (*Age* 19 June 1970:45).

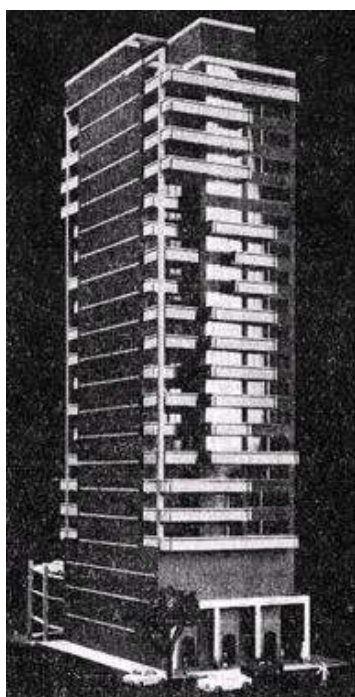


Figure 1. Roy Grounds' design for 13-15 Collins. (Source: *Age* 15 May 1968:40)

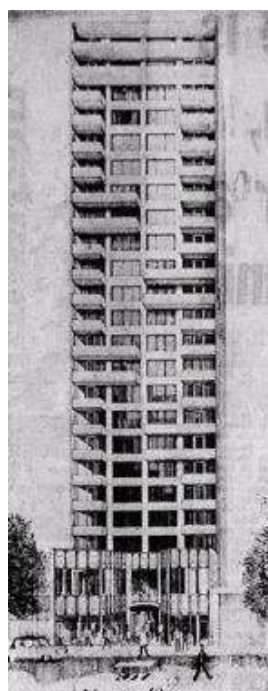


Figure 2. Kurt Popper's amended design for 13-15 Collins. (Source: *Age* 15 May 1968:40)

Completed in late 1970, 13-15 Collins Street was one of Melbourne's most luxurious blocks of strata title ('own-your-own') residential apartments. The proposed selling prices for each of the 48 flats varied from around \$35,000 for a single-bedroom apartment to \$185,000 for the 3700-square-foot penthouse on the twenty-second floor (*Age* 19 June 1970:45).

Even the single bedroom apartments were planned as 'luxury' residences featuring two bathrooms, dressing and powder rooms, a large kitchen, and balconies with views over the 'Paris end' of the city (*Age* 19 June 1970:45; 2 June 1971:11). Underground car parking and resident caretakers were also included (*Age* 19 June 1970:45).

At their completion, the apartments at 13-15 Collins Street were advertised as attractive 'city residences' offering 'a new exciting concept in modern living' (*Age* 23 September 1970:5). Contrary to initial expectations, however, the units sold slowly, with apartments in the building from the third floor up remaining empty for almost two years between 1970 and 1972 (*Age* 17 November 1972:3).

Unsuccessful sales resulted in changes being made to the building and its operation. Two months after the building's opening, the management of 13-15 Collins Street lodged an application to change the use of its lower-level suites from 'residential' to 'professional', in order to house medical practices (*Age* 19 June 1970:45).

In July 1971, the directors of 13-15 Collins Street sought Melbourne City council's permission to change the use of floors eight to 23 to commercial. The request was refused by the Building and Town Planning Committee because 13-15 Collins Street was built under an arrangement of a 'plot ratio bonus', which allowed eight-foot ceiling heights for residential buildings, instead of the nine-foot minimum requirements for office buildings. Based on this regulation, council advised that management needed to purchase land of 2000 square feet for use as a public park in order for commercial zoning to be approved (*Age* 17 November 1972:3).

In 1972, Hanover Holdings Pty Ltd acquired 13-15 Collins Street and commercial zoning was extended to all of the residential flats in the building (Age 8 August 1973:19). The total cost for the adaptation of residential suites for the accommodation of consulting rooms was about \$410,000, including the payment of a \$300,000 fee to council. Consequently, the market value of the building increased to around \$3 million in mid-1973 (Age 8 August 1973:19).

As a result of the rezoning, the units and penthouse at 13-15 Collins Street were granted two strata titles: residential and professional, which allowed conversion from a residence to an office (Age 9 May 1891:19; 19 August 1978:18). By 1974, businesses and doctors' practices were established in the premises (Age 25 September 1974:8).

Today, 13-15 Collins Street continues to house retail spaces in the lower levels and apartment/office units above the plaza. Today, the building comprises 17 residential properties, 27 businesses, three shops and two food and drink outlets (CoMMaps).

#### *Kurt Popper, architect*

Kurt Popper (1910-2008) was born in 1910 in Vienna, where his father was a successful joinery factory owner. With a keen interest in theatre and stage design, Popper studied at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, an art and craft school established in 1867 (Edquist:9). Popper was also a visiting student at the Academy of Fine Arts, where he attended the classes of Clemens Holzmeister, one of Vienna's leading architects (Edquist:11).

In March 1938, Popper was forced to leave Austria due to the political crisis in Europe. He first joined his friends in Paris. As soon as he could afford a ticket, he left for England, before travelling to Adelaide in April 1939, guaranteed by the Adelaide Jewish Community (Edquist:11).

In Adelaide, Popper briefly worked for Evans, Bruer & Hall, and completed a few commissions, one of which was featured in *Australian Home Beautiful*. While the war-time building restrictions were in action, he worked as an engineer (Edquist:11-12).

Popper held a position at the Housing Commission of Victoria in the office of Frank Heath in 1945-46. During this time, Popper's first independent commission in Melbourne, the Sherman house (1946) in East Malvern, was featured on the cover of *Australian Home Beautiful*. Following the success of the Sherman house, Popper established his own practice in Jolimont (Edquist:12).

During the 1950s and 1960s, Popper worked for many Jewish clients in St Kilda, Caulfield, Toorak and South Yarra. By the 1960s, he was recognised as one of the most prolific residential architects (Edquist:12).

While his practice ranged from large single-storey houses to own-your-own flats, one of his early achievements was high-rise city apartment blocks. Popper designed three early apartment blocks in Melbourne, including the first postwar era apartment in Crossly Lane. In recognition of his expertise, Popper was invited by the School of Architecture at the University of Melbourne to lecture on the design, construction and viability of high-rise apartments (Edquist:19).

Popper retired in 1975, at the age of 65, after over 35 years in practice (Age 18 June 2014).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

This multistorey residential building has a two-storey base/podium built to the street boundary with a twenty-storey tower set back from the street. The building is distinctively modern in its form and aesthetic and is a representative example of a new building type - the modern residential tower building that proliferated in Melbourne from the late 1960s.

The building is constructed with a concrete structural frame and a curtain wall facing Collins Street. The front façade is divided into a grid pattern determined by the intersection of vertical and horizontal bays, all clad in brown brick. Masonry balconies project forward on each floor at each edge of the building. At regular intervals, the balconies extend over two bays, creating a rhythmic pattern up the façade. The arrangement varies slightly at the top two levels (which are likely to correspond with penthouse apartments) where the masonry balcony spans the entire frontage.

The podium level is divided into two wings with a centrally positioned wide entry way to the apartment tower. Retail spaces are located on the ground level with commercial spaces on the first floor. While the form of the podium is intact, the finishes to the façade have been altered, including the removal of the original tiles. A curved canopy over the tower entry doors is the only remaining feature.

The side walls of the building are clad in brown brick, with the marking of the concrete floor plates evident. The side façade presents as a solid, monumental element of the building, in contrast to the more open and dynamic front façade.

## INTEGRITY

The tower section retains a high level of integrity. The form of the lower level podium remains but alterations have occurred to the finishes, including removal of the original tiles to the façade.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

There are no residential towers from the postwar period in central Melbourne on the Heritage Overlay for the City of Melbourne. A group of four residential towers is included in this study. All are relatively intact examples of a new building type that emerged in the late postwar period (late 1960s – early 1970s).

### **Other Post-War Modernist residential buildings in the Hoddle Grid**

There are a small number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street. These are detailed below.



Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (Kurt Popper, 1969) (Interim HO1263)



Exhibition Towers, 287-293 Exhibition Street (Kenneth McDonald & Associates, 1969-71)



Treasury Gate, 93-101 Spring Street (Moore & Hammond, 1971) (Interim HO1262)

### Analysis

Both 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970) were designed by émigré architect Kurt Popper, who was known for his apartment building designs.

Like the apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street, all three buildings are of modernist design, with structural concrete frames supporting curtain walls of repetitive glazed elements and masonry spandrels. In each case, primary aesthetic interest is derived from the expression of structure and materials (brick, concrete, glass) and the arrangement of structural elements (windows, balconies). There is a consistency to the arrangement of levels between all four buildings with retail/commercial spaces provided at podium level and multiple floors of apartments in a tower arrangement. Both 93-101 Spring Street and 199-207 Spring Street have a common space for apartment residents located at a mid-level.



## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
✓	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
✓	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

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*Argus*, as cited.

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Study Review 1993</b>	C
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<b>Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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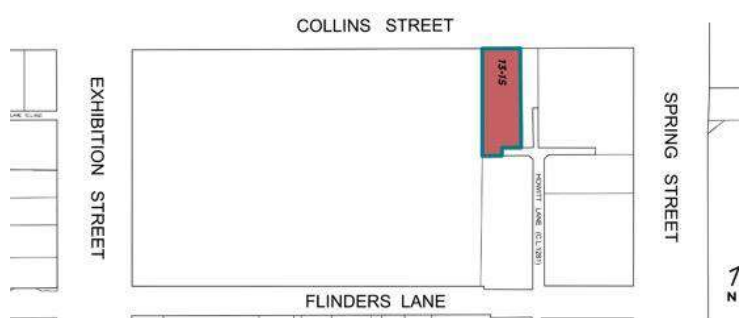
<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Apartment Building

**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street, Melbourne, built in 1970, and designed by émigré architect Kurt Popper.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing; and
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street, Melbourne is of local historic, representative, aesthetic and associative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street, constructed in 1970, is historically significant as one of the first wave of high-rise residential apartments constructed in the Melbourne CBD from the late 1960s, and before the introduction of a Victorian government policy in 1971 that directed where growth in Melbourne's housing supply could take place. The deliberate promotion of 13-15 Collins Street as a venue for a glamorous modern lifestyle contributes to an understanding of Melbourne as a modern city in the postwar period. (Criterion A)

The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street demonstrates a new building typology that emerged in the CBD in the late 1960s and early 1970s – the modern high-rise residential apartment building. The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street demonstrates key characteristics of its type. It was



constructed over a podium at the lower level accommodating retail and commercial spaces, with luxury residential apartments located in a recessed tower section. Residential accommodation included modern technologies such as individually controlled heating, cooling systems and security systems, access to communal recreation facilities located at the base of the apartments, basement car parking, and concierge/caretaker services. (Criterion D)

The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street is of aesthetic significance for its distinctly modernist character expressed in its structure, facade articulation and skilful composition of form and materials. This is achieved by the combination of an expressed concrete grid structural frame, brick cladding and large areas of glazing. The façade is further enlivened by projecting masonry balconies that create a rhythmic pattern by regularly extending over two bays. The top levels of penthouse apartments are distinguished by larger balconies that unify the façade. (Criterion E)

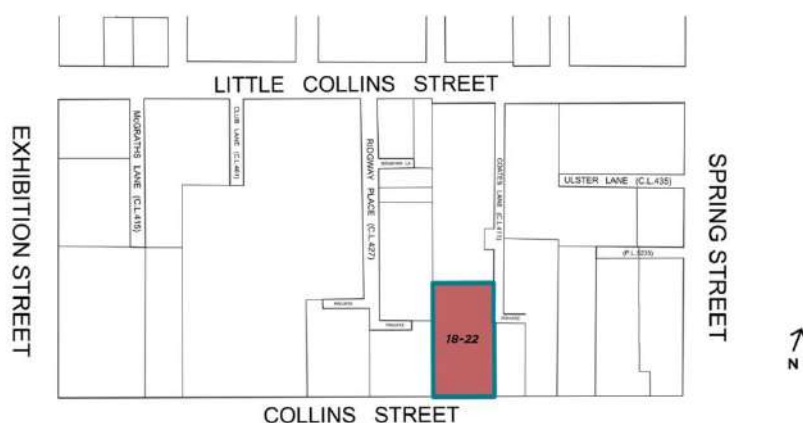
The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street is significant for its association with émigré architect Kurt Popper who brought European ideas about living in the city to the Melbourne CBD. Popper designed a number of residential apartment buildings in Melbourne including the six-storey 'Crossley House' (1967), which is known as the first modern residential block in Melbourne. (Criterion H)

### **Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)

<b>SITE NAME</b>	Coates Building
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	18-22 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102164



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

**HERITAGE INVENTORY**

No

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY**

HO504

**PLACE TYPE**

Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY**

Significant

**FORMER CATEGORY**

Significant

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:**

John A La Gerche

**BUILDER:**

G A Winwood Pty Ltd

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:**

Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:**

1958-1959

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Medical
1920s	Medical
1960s	Retail, Office

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The Coates Building is a curtain wall structure designed by architect John A La Gerche, and built in 1958-59 by builders G A Winwood Pty Ltd. It was constructed for owners Coates Building Pty Ltd, a 'type of co-operative ownership company' which was formed to develop the property. John A La Gerche was one of the directors of Coates Building Pty Ltd.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

### **SITE HISTORY**

The Coates Building is a curtain wall structure designed by architect John A La Gerche, and built in 1958-59 by builders G A Winwood Pty Ltd (Goad et al. 1993; BAP; *Cross-Section*, Oct 1959:2; BAP). It was constructed for owners Coates Building Pty Ltd, a 'type of co-operative ownership company' which was formed to develop the property. John A La Gerche was appointed as one of the directors of Coates Building Pty Ltd in August 1956 (*Age*, 30 Jul 1958:7; 5 Sep 1958:5).

The building was named after Walter Coates (father of A M Coates, a Director of Coates Building Ltd) who purchased the property at the first land sales held in Melbourne in 1840 (Goad et al. 1993). The Coates family retained ownership of the property until the 1950s when it was transferred to Coates Building Pty Ltd (*Argus*, 31 Aug 1956:3). The site was formerly occupied by three bluestone and brick houses which were demolished in May 1956 to facilitate the new development (Goad et al. 1993).

The permit application for the new building – designed to accord with the 40m (132 foot) height limit in place at the time – was received by the City of Melbourne in November 1957 (with an estimated total



cost of £500,000) (BAI). Construction of the building commenced in February 1958 and was completed in 17 months, nearly two months ahead of schedule (Goad et al. 1993).

The Coates Building was developed on a co-operative basis rather than being commissioned. La Gerche had first implemented this method of finance with his earlier development of Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street (1954-55) (Goad et al. 1993; *Cross-Section*, Oct 1959:2; Logan 2012:393). However, contemporary newspapers reported that the Coates Building development was:

*...the first time this method of financing had been used in Australia, the architect and a shareholder (Mr J. A. La Gerche) said yesterday. The company had pioneered the system (Age, 5 Sep 1958:5).*

An article in July 1958 stated that:

*...(the) Coates Building Ltd will make an issue of £450,000 9 per cent registered first-mortgage debentures to the public to help finance a £750,000 "glass house" being built at the top end of Collins Street.*

It continued that the:

*...total cost of £750,000 will be met partly by the debenture issue and the remainder by £300,000 ordinary share capital. Tenants of the building will hold shares in the company. The debenture issue is unusual in that the public will hold debentures secured by a mortgage over the completed building. The £100 debentures have a 9 per cent interest rate and will run for 21 years, maturing in December 1979 (Age 25 Jul 1958:6).*

Shareholders had the right to occupy a certain amount of floor space according to the number of shares they held. If shareholders didn't want to occupy the building, they could lease the space (Age, 5 Sep 1958:5). By July 1959, the entire space within the building had been acquired on a shareholding basis (Age, 11 Aug 1959:6).

In 1956, La Gerche visited the United States to study the latest trends in multi-storey office construction before the plans were completed (*Argus*, 25 Aug 1956:17; *Cross-Section*, Oct 1956:3). The visit is said to have resulted in his choice of stainless steel to the interior and exterior, which was believed at the time to be the first occasion of its use in Australia (Goad et al. 1993).

The Coates Building was designed as a steel frame building with precast floor units and a sheer glass and aluminum curtain wall to Collins Street (Goad et al. 1993). Architectural drawings dated August 1957 (Figure 1 & Figure 2) indicate that the Collins Street (south) elevation of the building was designed with rigidised stainless steel down the sides of the building, an aluminium cornice above the shopfronts and at the top of the building, and a wrought iron balustrade to the rooftop (BAP).

To the interior, the main entrance lobby was clad in stove enameled rigid stainless steel and a luminous ceiling immediately inside the entrance was made of contoured stainless steel and plexiglass (removed by 1993). Terrazzo flooring was laid inside and outside the building. As many occupants were expected to be members of the medical profession, a mechanical ventilation system was installed to enable full height partitions to be erected. The building comprised central heating via thermostatically controlled electric cables in the floor, windows that could be opened, and seven shops to the ground floor (Goad et al. 1993). In June 1959, newspaper articles advertised for tenants for the Coates Building as it was 'rapidly nearing completion'. These advertisements listed its features

as including sound-proof acoustic ceilings, heat absorbing, anti-glare windows and high-speed elevators as well as noting that an American system of radiant heating was to be used throughout the building (Age, 16 Jun 1959:6; 24 Oct 1961:5).

The 'glass box' project was discussed widely in contemporary newspapers and architectural publications, noting that it was 'the second building in Melbourne to have fully glazed and transparent multi-storey commercial curtain wall façade', following La Gerche's earlier design of Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street (1954-55) (Goad et al. 1993). The Coates Building and Gilbert Court were two of the earliest 'glass box' buildings in Australia (Logan 2012:393).

The University of Melbourne publication *Cross-Section* (Oct 1959:2) commented upon the building's completion in 1959, stating that the:

*Coates Building is a younger brother, in several senses, to Gilbert Court, Melbourne's first office building to earn the popular title as Glass House. Both earned the title in a technical sense as well as a popular one, by being remarkable for the absence of the traditionally expected upstanding fire-retarding spandrel between floors. In addition, both were promoted rather than commissioned, both are the only intrusions of this sort of architecture, this end of Collins Street.*

La Gerche's two Collins Street buildings suggested a:

*striking new direction for architectural expression in the central city and demonstrated characteristic cultural affinities with the United States in the same period* (Logan 2012:393).

The Coates Building and Gilbert Court 'epitomised the sought-after total transparency and minimalism of the period where the cladding almost disappeared exposing the unadorned structural frame and the building occupants to honest scrutiny. No other multi-storey offices achieved this in the brief period before air-conditioning forced a modest spandrel to hide the false ceiling and facades began a practical path to less transparency, particularly to the sun's heat' (Goad et al. 1993, cites the National Trust). Both buildings were the only architecture of this type at the east end of Collins Street until 1960 (Goad et al. 1993).

The completed building was occupied by various tenants including medical professionals, architect J A La Gerche, the Australian Geographic Society, magazines, advertising agents, showrooms and a salon (Goad et al. 1993). Air conditioning systems began to be installed in parts of the building from 1968. The ground floor foyer was first refurbished in 1987 (BAI).

### **John Alfred La Gerche, architect**

John Alfred La Gerche is best known for designing two of the earliest 'glass box' buildings in Australia – Gilbert Court (1954-5) and the Coates Building (1958-9), both located on Collins Street in Melbourne's city centre.

La Gerche undertook architectural training at the Melbourne Technical College, followed by the Melbourne University Architectural Atelier. He subsequently took up a position as draftsman with architects, Walter and Richard Butler, followed by five years as Chief Draftsman in the office of Frederick Morsby.

After serving in the Royal Australian Air Force and then the Royal Australian Navy during WWII, La Gerche took up the position of Chief Architect for Ansett Transport Industries. He designed several hotels in this role, including at Hayman Island, Queensland, which was heralded as Australia's first luxury international tourist resort.

In 1951, La Gerche established his own practice, where he focused on hotel remodelling as well as other commercial and industrial work. It was during this time that he designed Gilbert Court and the Coates Building, some of the first 'true curtain-walled office buildings in the city' (Reeves, Dictionary of Unsung Architects).

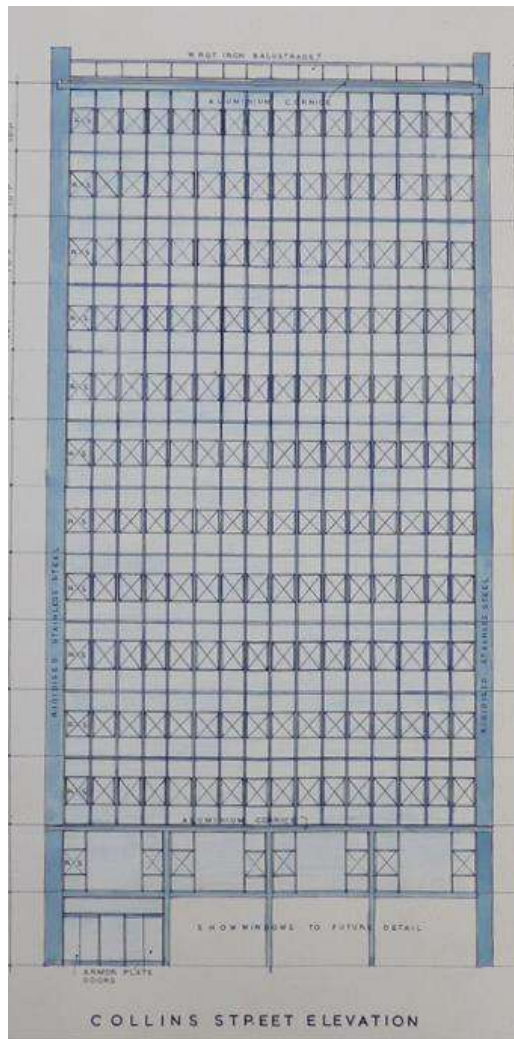


Figure 1. South elevation to Collins Street. Drawing by J A La Gerche, dated August 1957 (BAP).

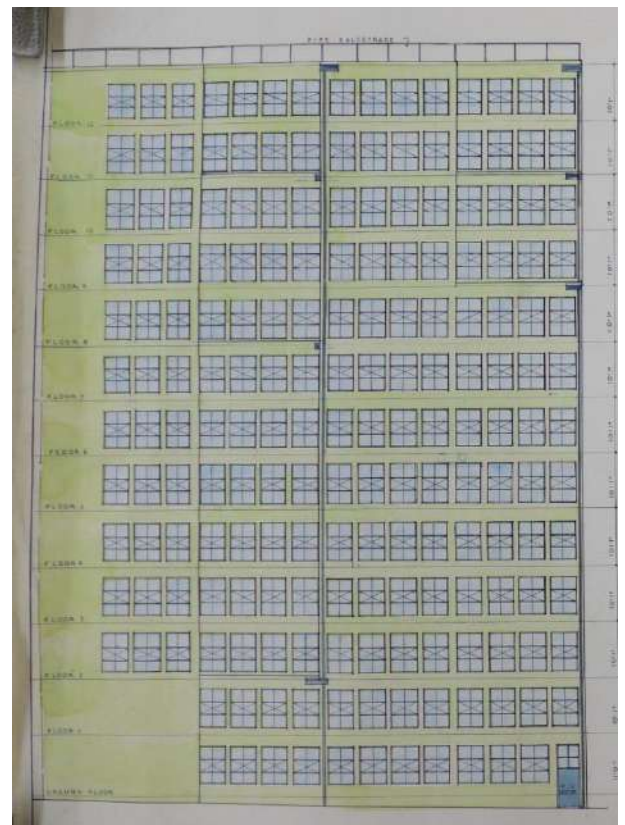


Figure 2. East elevation. Drawing by J A La Gerche, dated August 1957 (BAP).

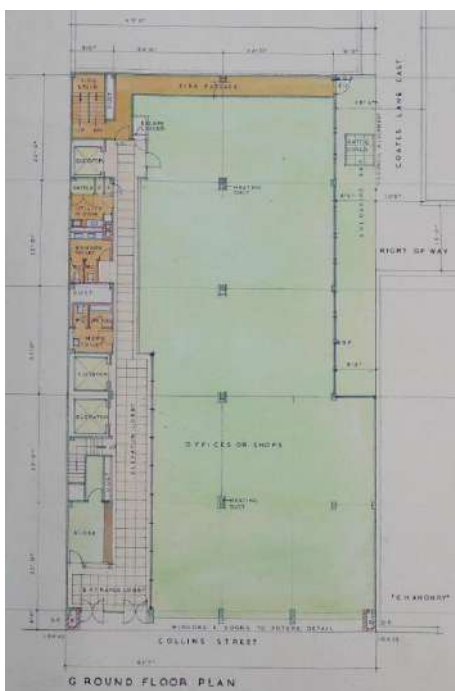


Figure 3. Ground floor plan. Drawing by J A La Gerche, dated June 1957 (BAP).

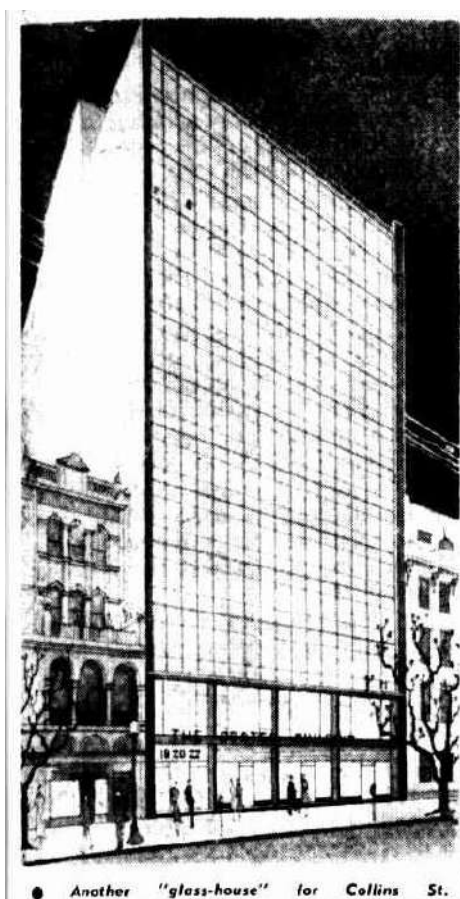


Figure 4. Illustration of the proposed design published in August 1956 (*Argus*, 31 Aug 1956:3).



Figure 5. An illustration of the proposed design, published in July 1958 while the building was under construction (*Age*, 30 Jul 1958:7).





Figure 6. Coates Building in 1960 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/111).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Coates Building at 18-22 Collins Street is a 12-storey commercial building located on the north side of Collins Street near the corner of Spring Street. Constructed in 1959 to a design by John A La Gerche, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Built to the then prevailing height-limit of 40m (132 foot), the Coates Building is rectangular in plan with a narrow frontage to Collins Street and recessed upper bays along the east façade which are visible above the roof of the adjoining building. The adjoining building to the east is of similar height to the Coates Building while a tall building with a frontage to Little Collins Street has been constructed at the rear. Coates Lane East provides access to the east side of the rear of the building from Little Collins Street.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with the visible façade to Collins Street presenting as a large transparent curtain wall of light aluminium frame and glass. The façade is entirely glazed, unlike typical curtain walls of the period which incorporated opaque spandrels that obscured the view of the interior of the building and provided a horizontal emphasis to the exterior. Continuous vertical mullions from the street canopy to the parapet above, slender horizontal elements at each internal floor level and light aluminium window transoms inbetween, result in a grid-like pattern across the whole façade. The central row of window sashes were openable (and may remain openable) however a number of air-conditioning units have been inserted in various openings across the façade.

The service core is located at the west side of the building. This facade is obscured by a later adjacent building. The upper levels of the east and rear facades are visible and contain rows of individual metal-framed windows which are set into solid walls. This conservative detailing contrasts with the fully glazed front façade of the building.



A thin projecting aluminium element divides the street level façade from the building above. At ground level in Collins Street, the general form of the shopfronts and west side entrance to the office tower appears to remain. Some re-cladding of the façade has occurred at street level.

## **INTEGRITY**

The Coates Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1959.

Overall, the building retains a very high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone minor alterations (eg re-clad entrance at street level and the insertion of air conditioning units into the principal facade), these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The Coates Building at 18-22 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1950s multi-storey office building design. The building's curtain wall façade, with rows of metal-framed glazing and vertical mullions which divide the entire facade into a grid-like pattern, can be clearly observed from Collins Street. Unlike the more common curtain wall of the 1950s, which alternated opaque spandrels with rows of glazing, the entire front façade of the Coates Building is glazed and transparent. Despite the redesign of the façade at street level, the upper facades of the Coates Building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Coates Building. These are detailed below.

### **State-significant places**

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

### **Locally-significant places**

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those from the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



### *Other Examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (B Evans & Partners, 1960) (Interim HO1006).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).

### **Analysis**

As a fine and highly representative example of its type, the Coates Building at 18-22 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey office buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – the Coates Building clearly demonstrates this class of place.



## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

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Logan, Cameron (2012), 'J. A. La Gerche' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

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*The Age*.

*The Argus*.

**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985**C

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993**A

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**Review of Heritage  
Overlay Listings in the  
CBD 2002**Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**Ungraded

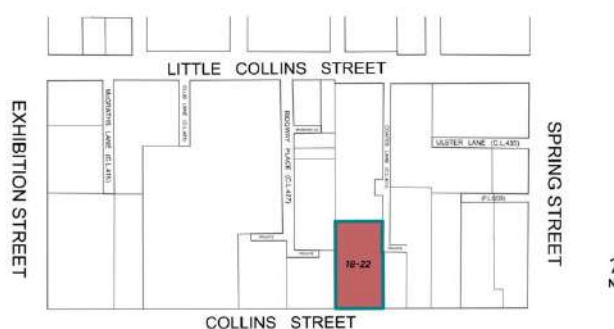
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Coates Building



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1958-59.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's very high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facade are not significant. Airconditioning units are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Coates Building at 18-22 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1958-59, to a design by John A La Gerche, the Coates Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Coates Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed to the prevailing 40m (132 foot) height limit of the time, the Coates Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1950s structure with a curtain wall street



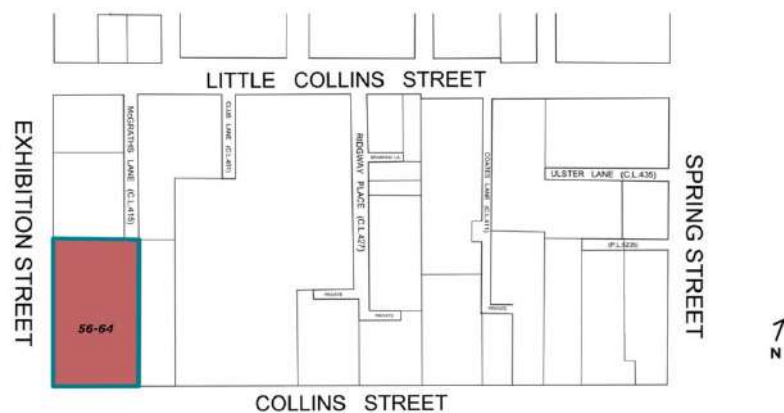
façade. The front façade of horizontal rows of framed glazing and vertical mullions which divide the facade into a grid-like pattern, and the use of materials such as aluminium window frames, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style. The fully glazed and transparent front façade is both unusual and distinctive in the Melbourne context (Criterion D).

#### **Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)

<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Reserve Bank of Australia
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	56-64 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102164



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b> October 2019		<b>SURVEY BY:</b> GJM Heritage	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO504
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Contributory
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Prof. Brian Lewis, C. McGrouther, C. D. Osborne, R. M. Ure, and F. C. Crocker	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Watts Constructions & Civil and Civic
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1964-1966

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
2 Governing, administering and policing the city	2.1 Commonwealth government
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Medical
1920s	Medical/Hotel
1960s	Retail/Service, Medical, Café/Restaurant, Car Park, Office

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The multi-storey tower on the north-east corner of Collins and Exhibition streets was constructed in 1964-1966 to serve as the Melbourne branch of the Reserve Bank of Australia. The building was designed by a planning panel that comprised Professor Brian B Lewis (Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Melbourne, appointed as the consulting architect), C McGrouther (Superintendent Premises Section, Establishment Department of the Reserve Bank), C D Osborne (Director of Architecture of the Department of Works), R M Ure (Chief Designing Architect of the Department of Works, Melbourne), and F C Crocker (Architect in Charge, Bank and Special Projects Section of the Department of Works, Sydney).

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Governing, administering and policing the city**

Public administration related to the government provision of services to Australian cities and states has always been based in capital cities. Government departments increased steadily from the late nineteenth century and continued to be of major importance after World War II (Marsden 2000:82).



Architect Miles Lewis argues that public works buildings before 1945 comprised 'restrained and sober metropolitan architecture', whereas after the war, government institutions sought to construct buildings that embodied images of modernity and progress. E F Borrie's 1954 plan for Melbourne, for example, proposed a new layout of major public buildings around Parliament House (Lewis et al 1993:221).

In the postwar period, the number of government offices increased dramatically in city centres due to two phenomena: an expansion in Commonwealth revenue and powers, and the extension of state government responsibilities to include welfare, housing, education, culture, and public transport services (Marsden 2000:83).

In 1948, the Commonwealth Government compulsorily acquired land on either side of Little Lonsdale Street, between Spring and Exhibition streets. The Commonwealth Centre (now demolished) was subsequently constructed on this block of land (with a street address of 11-39 La Trobe Street) over the period 1958 to the early 1960s. Its construction transformed 'the image of the Federal government in central Melbourne into that of a modern corporation' (Lewis et al 1993:223-24, 255).

As Commonwealth powers increased after World War II, Commonwealth buildings in city centres rose in number. Of particular influence was the transfer in 1942 of income tax revenue from the states to the Commonwealth and the resultant construction of buildings for the Taxation Office, including a building in Bourke Street, which opened in 1958. Marsden writes that the Commonwealth government presence, including the establishment after the war of the new Department of Housing and Construction, reinforced Melbourne's continuing pre-eminence as Australia's financial centre, at least until the 1960s.

A telephone exchange and postal hall building was constructed by the Commonwealth government at 114-120 Russell Street in the period 1948-54. In 1956 the building served as a relay station for the broadcasting of newly arrived television. In 1959, the Commonwealth Arbitration Courts opened at 450 Little Bourke Street, and in 1965 the Reserve Bank of Australia opened at 56-64 Collins Street. A telephone exchange was also constructed by the Commonwealth Department of Works at 376-382 Flinders Lane and opened in 1957.

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in

Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## **SITE HISTORY**

The multi-storey tower on the north-east corner of Collins and Exhibition streets was constructed in 1964-1966 to serve as the Melbourne branch of the Reserve Bank of Australia (PCA, 1989:3-4; RAIA). Prior to this date, the site was occupied by a hotel and three-storey residential buildings fronting Collins Street, dating to the Victorian period.

The Melbourne Reserve Bank of Australia building was designed by a planning panel that comprised: Professor Brian B Lewis, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Melbourne, who was appointed as the consulting architect; C McGrouther, Superintendent Premises Section, Establishment Department of the Reserve Bank; C D Osborne, Director of Architecture of the Department of Works; R M Ure, Chief Designing Architect of the Department of Works, Melbourne; and F C Crocker, Architect in Charge, Bank and Special Projects Section of the Department of Works, Sydney (SLV, Lewis Papers).

The Department of Works compiled a set of preliminary exploratory designs (Figures 1-4) that were designed for the site within the restricted statutory building height of 132 feet (40m), however during the design process this restriction was replaced by regulations that enabled an increased building height at the site. At the first meeting of the planning panel in February 1960, it was agreed that a fifth design – a 17-storey tower block (plus five basement levels) – was to be further developed (following approval by the Bank) for consideration of the panel (Figures 5-6). The panel agreed that ‘in considering the alternatives, the aesthetic advantages of greater height for the tower block are considered important’, noting that the ‘prestige value of the Reserve Bank will compete with adjacent high rise construction at the Consolidated Zinc Building in Collins Street and future high rise structures in the immediate vicinity’ (SLV, Lewis Papers).

An illustration of the proposed Melbourne branch of the Reserve Bank of Australia was published in the *Canberra Times* in February 1964 (7 Feb 1964:22) (Figure 7). The article reported that the new building project for Collins Street was to cost £2,829,750, ‘contain 20 storeys, 17 of them above ground, and will be 242 ft. high’. The article noted that the building was ‘designed and planned by the Commonwealth Department of Works together with Professor B. B. Lewis ... of Melbourne University and representatives of the bank’. It noted that the ground floor was to comprise a covered arcade and entrances off each main street, a ‘shooting gallery for the training of bank officers’, a staff cafeteria,

auditorium and amenities. The building was to be constructed of structural steel encased in concrete, aluminium framed windows with small decorative aluminium panel above each window (*Canberra Times*, 7 Feb 1964:22). A vertical emphasis would be created with white marble clad columns to the exterior, and spandrels of black granite (PCA 1989:3)

Planning panel meeting minutes confirm that the ground floor was designed as the public entrance lobby with the first and second floors designed to accommodate the banking chamber and bonds and stocks chamber (SLV, Lewis Papers), which were reflected on the exterior by increased floor heights. Models of the design are shown at Figures 8-10. These models omit the rooftop apartment. The three basement levels were constructed by 1964 by Watts Constructions and the tower was completed in 1966 by Civil and Civic (Figures 11-12) (PCA, 1989:3).

In 1965, eminent Australian artist Sir Sydney Nolan, in collaboration with two technical artists Robin Banks and Patrick Furse, completed the mural entitled *Eureka Stockade* to be installed within the foyer of the Reserve Bank, Melbourne (Figure 13). The mural was commissioned by Dr H C Coombs, Governor of the Reserve Bank, who suggested that Nolan consider a theme related to an Australian legend (VHD, Nolan Eureka Mural). In accepting the commission, Nolan replied to Dr Coombs that he hoped he could do 'something worthy of... the spirit you bring to all these projects' (Nolan, RBAM). The mural depicts the Eureka Stockade, the uprising of goldminers against the colonial authorities. It measured 20 metres in length and 3.6 metres in height, comprising 66 panels executed in jewellery enamel on heavy gauge copper. In 2018 the mural was removed from the site and relocated to the Australian National University in Canberra.

A 1989 Commonwealth Government report indicates that works were undertaken that comprised refurbishment of the above ground interiors, upgrades for compliance with current building standards and enlargement and remodelling of the ground floor foyer to create a 'modern appearance', particularly to appeal to prospective private tenants (PCA 1989:1, 4). City of Melbourne records indicate that the works were carried out in 1993 (CoMMaps). As part of the works, the perimeter walls of the foyer were realigned to the street boundaries and the ground level facades to Exhibition and Collins streets reconstructed in dark grey granite panelling (PCA 1989:7).



Figure 1. Preliminary exploratory design 'A' (Preliminary design 'A'; SLV, Lewis Papers).

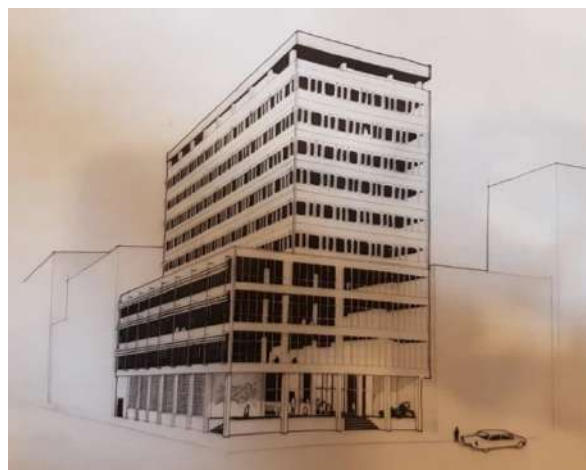


Figure 2. Preliminary exploratory design 'D' (Preliminary design 'D'; SLV, Lewis Papers).



Figure 3. Preliminary exploratory design 'B' (Preliminary design 'B'; SLV, Lewis Papers).

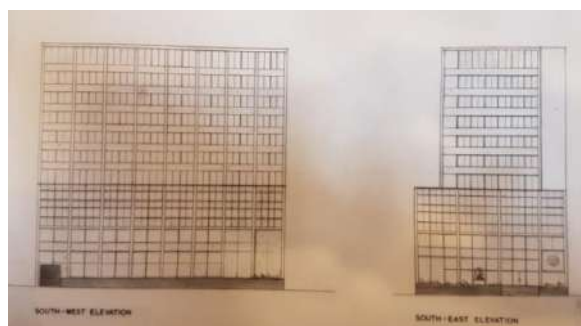


Figure 4. Preliminary exploratory design 'C' (Preliminary design 'C'; SLV, Lewis Papers).



Figure 5. Preliminary study of design 5 (or design 'E') – the first design iteration of a multi-storey tower for the Reserve Bank at the subject site (SLV, Lewis Papers).



Figure 6. A preliminary render of the ground floor as viewed from Collins Street (Preliminary Study 5A; SLV, Lewis Papers).

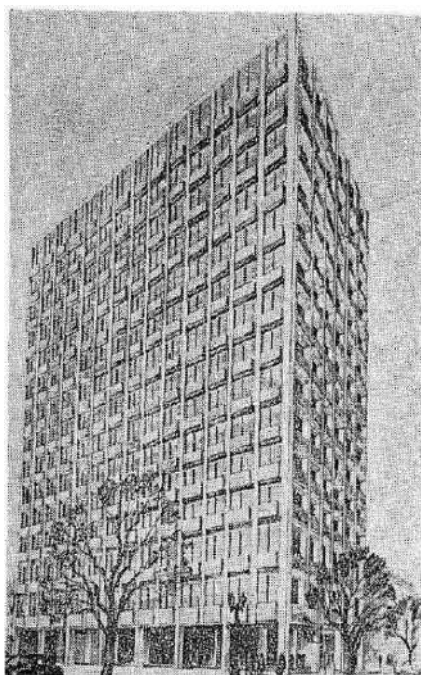


Figure 7. An illustration of the proposed 'new Reserve Bank of Australia building', published in the *Canberra Times* in February 1964.

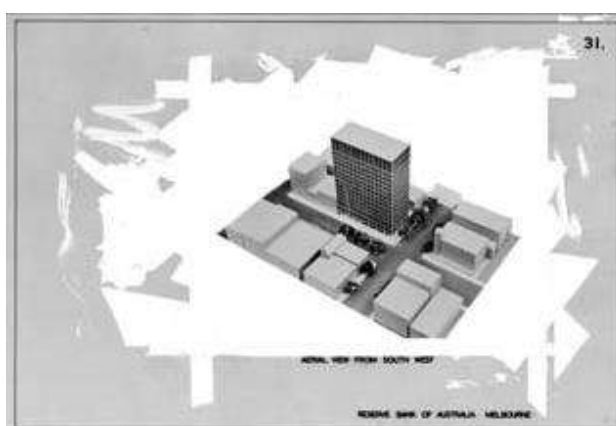


Figure 8. Model of the south and west elevations. Image dated 1957-1984; probably dates to c1964 (NAA, item B6295, 579/31).

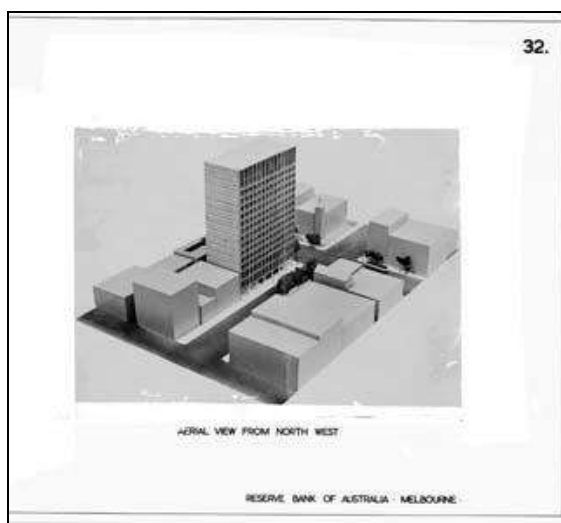


Figure 9. Model of the north and west elevations. Image dated 1957-1984; probably dates to c1964 (NAA, item B6295, 579/32).





Figure 10. Model of the south and west elevations from ground level. Image dated 1957-1984; probably dates to c1964 (NAA, item B6295, 579/33).



Figure 11. The newly completed building in 1966, showing the rooftop butterfly-roof apartment (NAA, item A1200, L57100).



Figure 12. Photo of the subject site dating to 1969 (NAA, item A1200\_L79699).



Figure 13. The Sydney Nolan mural in the foyer of the Reserve Bank in 1962 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H2000.195/45).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Reserve Bank of Australia building at 56-64 Collins Street is a 16-storey commercial building, with three-level basement and roof top caretaker's flat, located at the north-east corner of Collins and Exhibition streets. Constructed in 1964-66 to a design by the Commonwealth Department of Works and a Panel of expert architects, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction, with alternating horizontal strips of paired aluminium framed windows and black granite spandrel panels, set between white marble-clad columns. These materials form a highly regular geometric grid across the main facades of the building. The extended upper level of the tower contains plant and building services and is externally clad by louvres set between the columns.

At roof level the caretaker's flat is set back from the edge of the main form of the building and has a distinctive butterfly roof which is clearly visible from the north in Exhibition Street. The tower occupies the western part of the site with vehicle access to the basement car parking and bullion vaults accessed to the east off Collins Street.

The ground floor foyer of the Reserve Bank was redesigned in the 1990s with the perimeter walls brought into alignment with the walls above. Remaining internal columns indicate the original wall placement. At this time the new external ground level facades were constructed in dark grey granite panelling and the internal foyer walls and floors were finished in panels of marble and granite. The foyer contains an open café at the south-west corner, an arched entrance with revolving door at the Collins Street entrance, an arched entrance from Exhibition Street with adjacent concierge desk and lift lobby at the north end.

## INTEGRITY

The Former Reserve Bank of Australia building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact from its original construction in 1964-66. The original design at street level provided both space and shelter for pedestrian traffic by setting walls back from the building line behind rows of columns. Works in the 1990s has altered this original design.

Overall, the Former Reserve Bank of Australia building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey office building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Reserve Bank of Australia Building at 56-64 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s multi-storey commercial building design. Situated on the corner of Collins and Exhibition streets, the building's grid-like curtain wall of horizontal aluminium framed glazing and black granite spandrels and vertical white marble-clad columns can be clearly observed from a number of viewpoints. Despite the redesign of street-level facades, the upper facades of the building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Reserve Bank of Australia building. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:





Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)





Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street  
(Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street  
(Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street  
(B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street  
(Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street  
(unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street  
(Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)





Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kelle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)

**Analysis**

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist office building, the Former Reserve Bank of Australia building at 56-64 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a number of other examples identified above – the Former Reserve Bank of Australia building clearly demonstrates this class of place.



**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

### MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

### OTHER

N/A

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Local citation for 'Nolan Eureka Mural, Reserve Bank 56 - 64 Collins Street, Melbourne, Melbourne City'.

**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985**D

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993**C

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**Review of Heritage  
overlay listings in the  
CBD 2002**Ungraded

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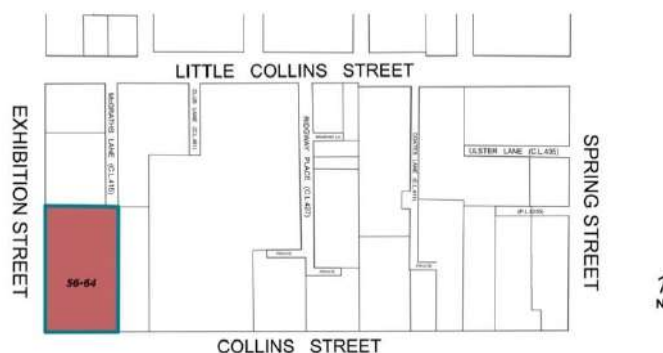
**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**Ungraded

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Reserve Bank of Australia

**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1964-66.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facades are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Former Reserve Bank of Australia at 56-64 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1964-66 to a design with input from Prof. Brian Lewis, C. McGrouther, C. D. Osborne, R. M. Ure, and F. C. Crocker, the Former Reserve Bank of Australia has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).



The Former Reserve Bank of Australia is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist office building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the postwar period, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a dominant 16-storey building on a corner site, the Former Reserve Bank of Australia building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a postwar curtain-wall structure. The cuboid form, with facades displaying a regular grid composed of horizontal bands of glazing with dark spandrels and contrasting vertical columns, as well as the variety of materials, including granite and marble cladding and aluminium window frames, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

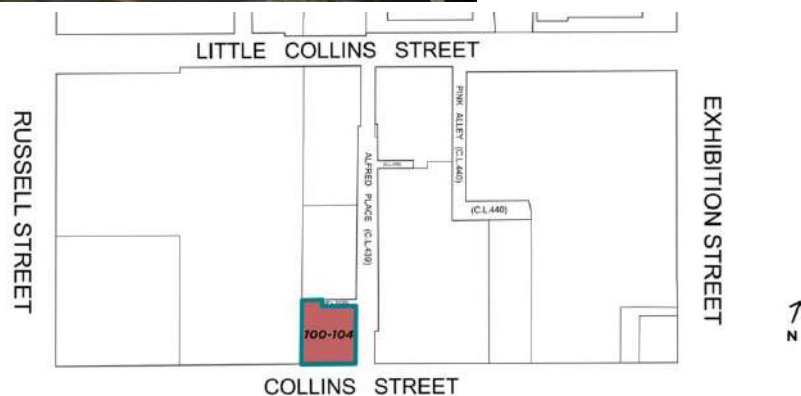
**Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Gilbert Court
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	100-104 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102156



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b> October 2019		<b>SURVEY BY:</b> GJM Heritage	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO504
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	John A La Gerche	<b>BUILDER:</b>	E A Watts Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1954-1955

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Medical
1920s	Merchant, Medical, Retail, Studio
1960s	Medical, Café/Restaurant, Retail, Hairdresser, Workshop, Office, Studio, Club

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

Gilbert Court is a curtain wall structure designed by architect John A La Gerche and built in 1954-55 by builders E A Watts Pty Ltd. It was developed by Gilbert Court Pty Ltd and owned on a co-operative share basis by tenants. It was noted as Melbourne's first office building to earn the popular title as 'Glass House'.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.



### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

### **SITE HISTORY**

Gilbert Court is a curtain wall structure designed by architect John A La Gerche, and built in 1954-55 by builders E A Watts Pty Ltd. It was developed by Gilbert Court Pty Ltd and owned on a co-operative share basis by tenants (Logan 2012:393; *Argus*, 11 Mar 1954:1; *Age*, 27 May 1955:19).

Gilbert Court was one of the first speculative office buildings constructed in the post-World War II period. Rather than wait for commissions, La Gerche assessed the increasing demand for office space in Melbourne's central business district and took on the role of developer for Gilbert Court (Logan 2012:393; *Cross-Section*, Oct 1959:2). In 1953, *The Herald* stated that the development was 'the first co-operative office enterprise launched in Melbourne,' and that this method of financing new office buildings was popular in the United States (*Herald*, 18 Sep 1953:10). La Gerche later used this finance method on his development of the Coates Building at 18-22 Collins Street (1958-59). The company, Gilbert Court Pty Ltd, was registered in October 1953, before purchasing 100 Collins Street (*Age*, 17 Oct 1953:6).

The building was named in honour of Gilbert Walsh, who had purchased the property in 1950 with the intention of building a 12-storey building. However, Walsh died in December 1951 and his wife subsequently sold the land with the condition that the building would be named after her husband. Mrs Peggy Walsh was appointed chairman of the directors for Gilbert Court Pty Ltd and owned the ground floor shops, one of which she occupied for her millinery business (*Argus*, 21 Jul 1955:11).

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the new building in March 1954 (estimated total cost of £212,400) (BAI) and work commenced on the project the same month (*Argus*, 11 Mar 1954:1). The development attracted much attention and was reported on widely in contemporary newspapers and architectural journals. Gilbert Court was to be 'Melbourne's most ultra and up-to-date building' (*Age*, 27 Oct 1953:11) and 'the first in Australia to have a full glass construction on both frontages' (*Age*, 20 Feb 1954:3). In September 1953, *The Herald* (18 Sep 1953:10) reported that the 'limit-height blue glass and aluminium building', also described as a 'glass block,' was to occupy 'one of the most commanding and exclusive sites in any Australian capital.' The University of Melbourne's publication *Cross-Section* noted in April 1954 that Gilbert Court 'indicates heavily the New York influence: a box of glass here doing its best to ignore the regulation set-backs which once were affected as a "sky-scraper" silhouette'. Newspapers suggested that the design of the 'Glass House' was influenced by the United Nations Headquarters in New York (*Argus*, 11 Mar 1954:1; 21 Jul 1955:11). A few years after completion in May 1958, *Cross-Section* reported that Gilbert Court had 'firmly attached to its reputation the title "Melb's first glass box"' (*Cross-Section*, May 1958:2).

Gilbert Court was designed with thirteen floors, a reinforced concrete frame, full transparent curtain walls to the streets and sheer walls on the other elevations, with the service core backing on one of these (Taylor & Stewart 2001:31). Taylor & Stewart state that, like the Coates Building, Gilbert Court was 'distinguished by the absence of the traditional upstanding fire-retarding spandrels between floors' that were no longer required under the fire codes due to advances in alternative systems (Taylor & Stewart 2001:31, 36).

The site lent itself to the design, receiving natural light on three sides, with no light courts needed. A 1953 article reported that the building was to be constructed of reinforced concrete and faced with pale blue wired glass from pavement to roof on both the Collins Street and Alfred Place facades. There was to be a vitreous-enamel-covered pier on the corner and a blank wall on the west side. The glass walls were to comprise more than 1,000 windows set in anodised aluminium frames without any visible columns or masonry, giving the effect of an enormous glass screen. The concrete floor slabs were to be cantilevered three feet beyond the structural frame (*Herald*, 18 Sep 1953:10). Partial air-conditioning was installed, but hopper windows were also used to ensure adequate ventilation (Taylor & Stewart 2001:31).

The Equitable Probate and General Life Insurance Co. occupied the building in 1957, erecting a large sign on the rooftop (Figures 5 and 6).

Four years after completion of Gilbert Court, *Cross-Section* (Oct 1959:2) stated that Gilbert Court was 'Melbourne's first office building to earn the popular title as Glass House', and that the second was La Gerche's Coates Building built in 1958-59:

*Both earned the title in a technical sense as well as a popular one, by being remarkable for the absence of the traditionally expected upstanding fire-retarding spandrel between floors. In addition, both were promoted rather than*

*commissioned, both are the only intrusions of this sort of architecture, this end of Collins Street (Cross-Section, Oct 1959:2).*

Architectural historian Miles Lewis states that Gilbert Court was the first generally recognised postwar example of a city curtain wall (as it was finished before the Alliance Assurance Co building at 408-410 Collins Street, which was completed in 1957). Lewis notes that Gilbert Court's curtain wall 'is a facade wall, but it covers the entire facade rather than being framed or limited in the manner of Leonard House [44-6 Elizabeth Street; 1923-24] and the Barnett Building [164 Bourke Street; 1937-8]. It is clad in aluminium with heat-resisting glass, which in technical terms was not especially novel even for Victoria, but it suggests the aesthetic of the United Nations Building' (Lewis 2015:8.10.11).

Taylor (2001:31) claims that Gilbert Court was the first multi-storeyed building to embody the principles of Modernism. Both buildings were the only architecture of this type at the east end of Collins Street until 1960 (Goad et al. 1993).

Recent commentary on Gilbert Court states:

*The building predated Bates Smart & McCutcheon's ICI House, and like ICI House, it eschewed traditional architectural language, employing the glass curtain wall that had become synonymous with the corporate skyscraper in the United States in the post-war decades. La Gerche's Collins Street buildings [Gilbert Court and Coates Building] suggested a striking new direction for architectural expression in the central city and demonstrated characteristic cultural affinities with the United States in the same period (Logan 2012:393).*

La Gerche's Coates Building and Gilbert Court

*... epitomised the sought-after total transparency and minimalism of the period where the cladding almost disappeared exposing the unadorned structural frame and the building occupants to honest scrutiny. No other multi-storey offices achieved this in the brief period before air-conditioning forced a modest spandrel to hide the false ceiling and facades began a practical path to less transparency, particularly to the sun's heat (Goad et al. 1993, cites the National Trust).*

Alterations and renovations to Gilbert Court in the 1980s included the removal of air conditioning units to the windows within the curtain walls on the south and east elevations, and replacement with glazing (BAP).

### **John Alfred La Gerche (1907-c1972), architect**

John Alfred La Gerche is best known for designing two of the earliest 'glass box' buildings in Australia – Gilbert Court (1954-55) and the Coates Building (1958-59), both located on Collins Street in Melbourne's city centre.

La Gerche undertook architectural training at the Melbourne Technical College, followed by the Melbourne University Architectural Atelier. He subsequently took up a position as draftsman with architects, Walter and Richard Butler, followed by five years as Chief Draftsman in the office of Frederick Morsby.

After serving in the Royal Australian Air Force and then the Royal Australian Navy during WWII, La Gerche took up the position of Chief Architect for Ansett Transport Industries. He designed several

hotels in this role, including at Hayman Island, Queensland, which was heralded as Australia's first luxury international tourist resort.

In 1951, La Gerche established his own practice, where he focused on hotel remodelling as well as other commercial and industrial work. It was during this time that he designed Gilbert Court and the Coates Building, some of the first 'true curtain-walled office buildings in the city' (Reeves, Dictionary of Unsung Architects).

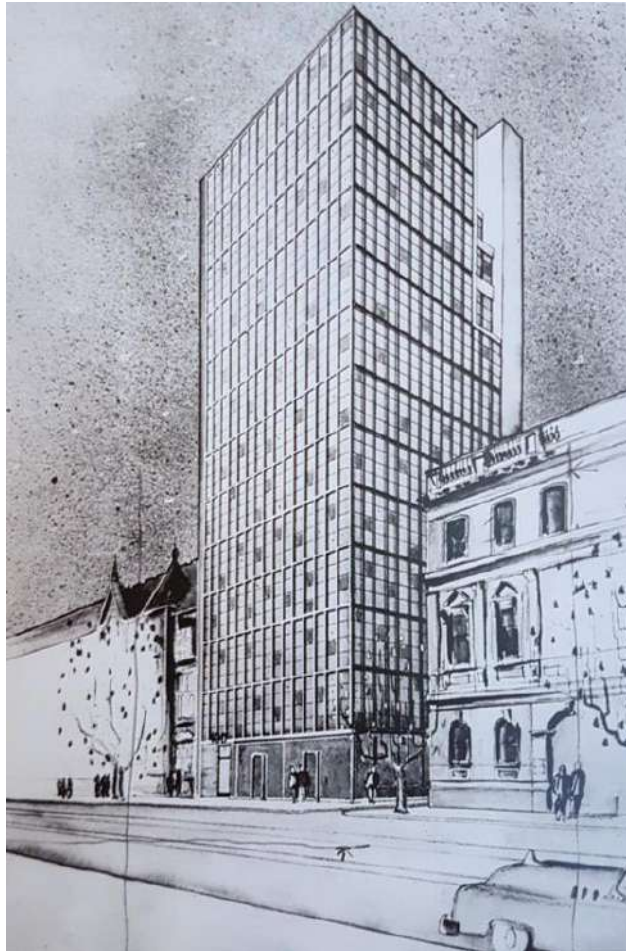


Figure 1. Drawing of the Gilbert Court project by J A La Gerche. No date (Logan 2012:394). Part of this drawing was published in *Cross-Section* in April 1954.





Figure 2. Construction of Gilbert Court, photo dated 28 February 1955 (SLV, Lyle Fowler, photographer, Image H92.20/5270).



Figure 3. Photo of the building nearing completion, published in *Cross-Section* in July 1955.





Figure 4. Gilbert Court in 1955 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H88.40/950).



Figure 5. Gilbert Court, the premises of The Equitable Probate and General Life Insurance Co., in April 1957 (SLV, Lyle Fowler, photographer, Image H92.20/6016).



Figure 6. Gilbert Court, the premises of The Equitable Probate and General Life Insurance Co., in April 1957 (SLV, Lyle Fowler, photographer, Image H92.20/6017).



Figure 7. Entrance to Gilbert Court c1985 (Butler via Flickr).



Figure 8. The building in 1984 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler13462).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street is a 12-storey commercial building located on the north-west corner of Collins Street and Alfred Place. Constructed in 1954-55 to a design by John A La Gerche, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Built to the then prevailing height limit of 40m (132 feet), Gilbert Court is square in plan with main frontages to Collins Street and Alfred Place. The building has a small footprint, occupying approximately one quarter of the block between Collins and Little Collins Streets. The building appears as a large transparent box with the two visible street facades presenting as entire walls of light aluminium frame and glass which wrap around the south-east corner. The service core occupies the west side of the building and presents to the exterior as a sheer wall.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction with the two adjacent curtain walls formed from aluminium framed windows and spandrels of blue obscure, but not opaque, glass. These curtain walls run continuously from the front corner of the west façade, around to a sheer wall at the rear of the east façade, which encompasses a secondary stair block. At this junction, the east facade steps back over the top floors, to accentuate the glass prism appearance of the building when viewed from Collins Street. The use of an entirely glazed façade was highly innovative at the time of



construction when the typical curtain wall incorporated opaque spandrels that obscured the view of the building's interior and provided a horizontal accent to the façade.

A slim projecting element delineates the upper façade from the street level shopfronts. The simplicity and transparency of the façade is continued at street level, with aluminium framed butt-jointed shopfronts and fully glazed doors and the absence of a verandah awning.

## **INTEGRITY**

Gilbert Court, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1954-55.

Overall, the building retains a very high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone minor alterations, particularly at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of the emerging multi-storey commercial building design of the mid-1950s. The building's two grid-like curtain wall façades, with rows of aluminium-framed glazing and blue obscure glass spandrels and vertical mullions, can be clearly observed from Collins Street and Alfred Place. The use of two adjacent and entirely glazed transparent façades on a corner site was highly innovative at the time of construction. Despite the redesign of the façade at street level, the upper facades of Gilbert Court remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to Gilbert Court. These are detailed below.

### **State-significant places**

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

### **Locally-significant places**

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those from the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

### Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:





Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (B Evans & Partners, 1960) (Interim HO1006).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-58).

### Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of its type, Gilbert Court at 101-104 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – Gilbert Court clearly demonstrates this class of place.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

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Butler, Graeme (1985), *Melbourne Central Activities District Conservation Study*, Building Citations and Building Identification Forms (accessed via Heritage Victoria's Hermes database).

Butler, Graeme, 'Gilbert Court Collins St' via Flickr.com. Survey of 20th Century architecture in Victoria for the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA, Vic) by architectural historian, Graeme Butler, conducted 1982-1985.

City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, reference nos. as cited.

*Cross-Section*: No. 18, Apr 1954; No. 33, July 1955; No. 67, May 1958; No. 84, October 1959.

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Lewis, Miles (2015), '8.10 Metal Windows & Curtain Walling', in *Australian Building*, <<http://www.mileslewis.net/>>, accessed November 2019.

Logan, Cameron (2012), 'J. A. La Gerche' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

Reeves, Simon, 'John A La Gerche (1907-1992)', in Dictionary of Unsung Architects, accessed via <[http://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua\\_lagerche.html](http://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua_lagerche.html)>, November 2019.

State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, images and photographers as cited.

Taylor, Jennifer & Susan Stewart (2001), *Tall buildings : Australian business going up : 1945-1970*, Sydney [NSW].

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985**

A

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**Central City Heritage  
Study 1993**

A

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**Review of Heritage  
overlay listings in the  
CBD 2002**

Ungraded

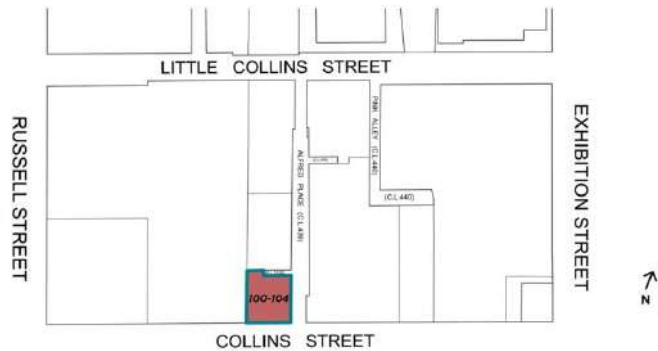
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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**

Ungraded

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Gilbert Court**PS ref no:** HOXXXX**What is significant?**

Former Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1954-55.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's very high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facade are not significant.

**How it is significant?**

Former Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

**Why it is significant?**

Constructed in 1954-55, to a design by John A La Gerche, Former Gilbert Court has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

Former Gilbert Court is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was emerging in the mid-1950s and was popular in the late 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed to the prevailing 40m (132 foot) height limit of the time, Former Gilbert Court clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1950s structure with two adjacent, fully glazed curtain wall façades. The transparent façades of alternating

rows of glazing and obscure glass spandrels, and vertical mullions which divide the facade into a grid-like pattern, and the use of materials such as blue obscure glass and aluminium window frames, demonstrate important aspects of the Modernist style. On completion it earned the title of Melbourne's first 'Glass Box' (Criterion D).

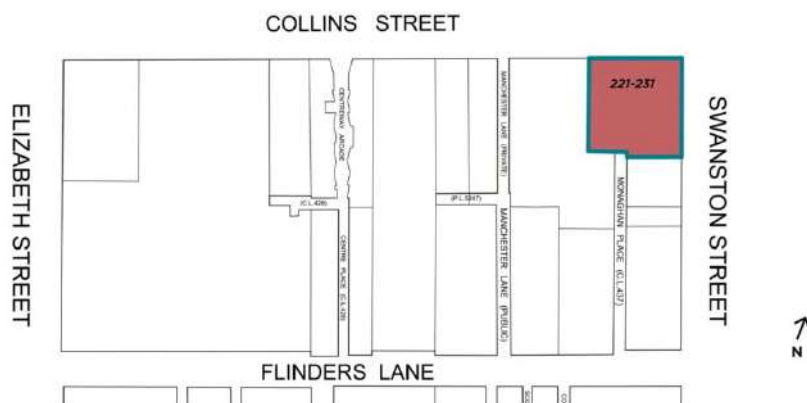
**Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Wales Corner
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	221-231 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102079



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b> October 2019		<b>SURVEY BY:</b> GJM Heritage	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO502
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Contributory
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Stephenson & Turner	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Lewis Construction Co.
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1964-1966



## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES Lot 1 LP97149	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail/Workshop, Medical, Café/Restaurant, Office, Merchant, Studio, Trade, Workshop, Caretaker
1920s	Retail, Library, Retail/Workshop, Medical, Hairdresser, Education, Office, Studio, Merchant, Registry Office, Caretaker
1960s	Retail, Storage, Hairdresser, Medical, Workshop, Office, Studio, Café/Restaurant, Bank, Education, Caretaker

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The multi-storey building at the corner of Collins and Swanston streets, known as Wales Corner, was designed by architects Stephenson & Turner and constructed in 1964-66 for the Bank of New South Wales.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

The multi-storey building known as Wales Corner was designed by architects Stephenson & Turner and constructed in 1964-66 for owners the Bank of New South Wales (BAP; Butler 1985: Building ID Form; Age, 18 Jul 1962:5). The builders were the Lewis Construction Co. (Age, 25 May 1965:23).

An article published in July 1962 featuring the proposed building, to be called 'Wales Corner', reported that construction of the corner building was to commence early in 1963. The building was to incorporate an arcade from Swanston to Collins Street that would accommodate seven shops, a shop for Damman's tobacconists who had occupied the corner site for more than 90 years, and a banking chamber. The upper floors were for business and professional suites, showrooms and office spaces (Figure 1 shows the earlier proposed design) (Age, 18 Jul 1962:5).

City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the new building in December 1964 (estimated to cost £1,128,000) (BAI). Architectural drawings by Stephenson & Turner dated 1962 and 1964 show a modified version of the earlier design (Figure 2 - Figure 5), comprising a corner tower and low-scale section to the south, fronting Swanston Street. This low-scale section comprised the arcade providing access to retail shops at ground level, and a rooftop garden to the first floor. The banking chambers and bank offices were to occupy the ground and first floors of the tower. The building was designed with reconstructed stone panels and fixed glazing and reversible sash windows to the exterior (BAP).

The building was completed in 1966 and the Bank of New South Wales branch had opened by September 1966 (*Age*, 5 Sep 1966:2). The Bank of New South Wales continued to occupy the building into the 1980s (Butler 1985: Building ID Form). In 2019, the banking chambers are occupied by Westpac Bank.

### **Stephenson & Turner, architects**

Stephenson & Turner was formed in 1921 as Stephenson & Meldrum by A G Stephenson and Percy Meldrum, who had met at London's Architectural Association. In 1925, the firm employed Keith Turner, who was well known for his design skills and headed up the newly-established Sydney office from 1934.

Stephenson & Meldrum specialised in hospital design. During the 1930s alone, the practice gained 20 major hospital commissions. In Melbourne, this included: Mercy Hospital, East Melbourne (1934), Freemasons' Hospital, East Melbourne (1935-36) and the Royal Melbourne Hospital (1938-39).

Meldrum split from the practice in 1937, having become uncomfortable with the firm's heightened focus on hospital work. It continued as Stephenson & Turner from this time, and from the 1940s onwards witnessed an extensive period of expansion. Offices were established in Newcastle, NSW (1947) and Adelaide, SA (1955), and internationally in Singapore (1949) and Wellington (1956). Offices in Auckland, Dunedin, Canberra and Hong Kong soon followed.

Though Turner retired from the practice in 1956, the firm continued to be known as Stephenson & Turner. Beyond their hospital work, the firm also designed industrial complexes, commercial office buildings, banks, town plans (including Shepparton in 1946) and the Australian pavilions at the Paris Exposition (1937) and the New York World's Fair (1939-40). Office buildings designed by Stephenson & Turner in Melbourne in the postwar period included 390 Lonsdale Street (1959); the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building at 308-334 Collins Street (1963); Wales Corner at 221-231 Collins Street (1964-66) and Embank House at 325 Collins Street (1965).





Figure 1. An earlier proposed design, published in July 1962 (Age, 18 Jul 1962:5).

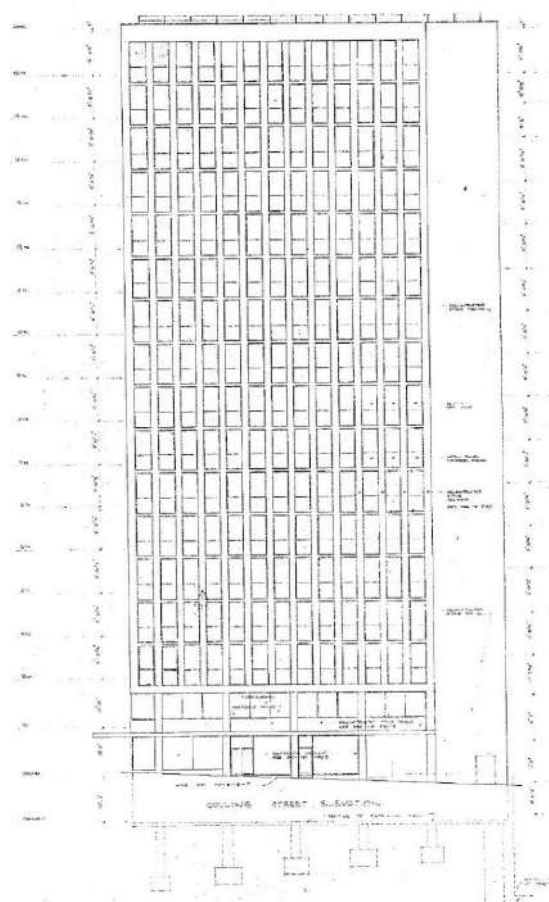


Figure 2. Northern elevation to Collins Street. Drawings by Stephenson & Turner, dated August 1964 (BAP).

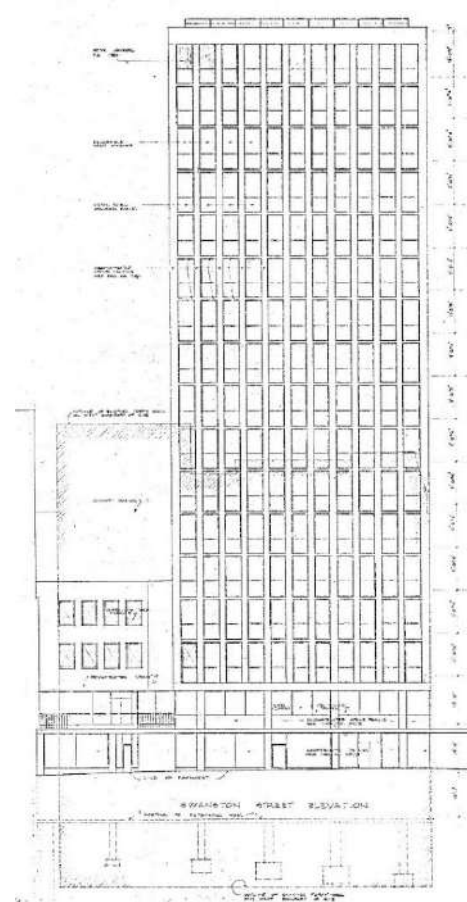


Figure 3. Eastern elevation to Swanston Street. Drawings by Stephenson & Turner, dated August 1964 (BAP).

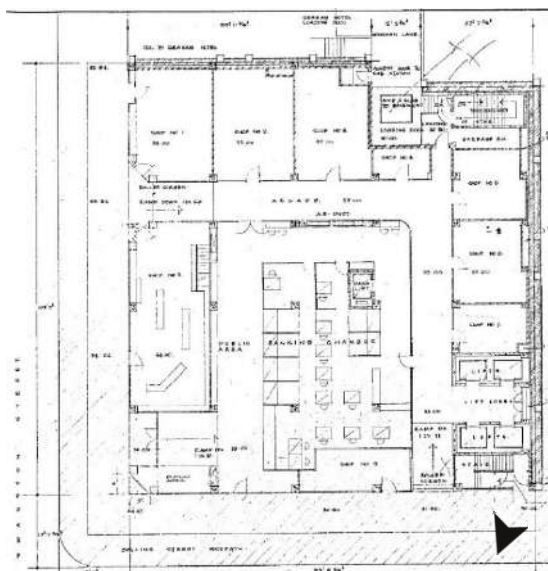


Figure 4. Ground floor plan showing the banking chambers, arcade and retail spaces. Drawings by Stephenson & Turner, dated October 1962 (BAP).

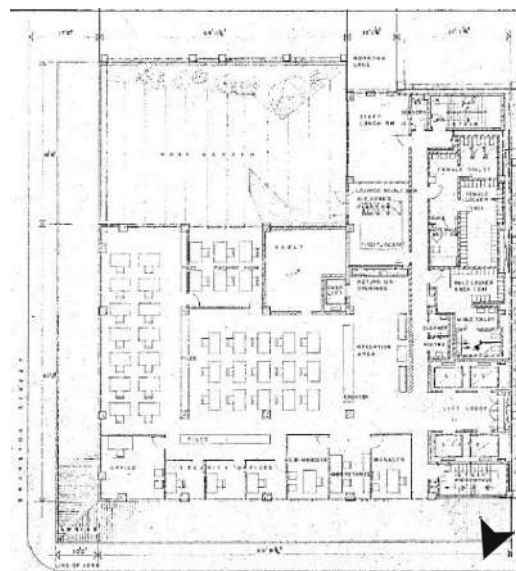


Figure 5. First floor plan showing the bank offices and rooftop garden. Drawings by Stephenson & Turner, dated August 1962 (BAP).



Figure 6. Wales Corner in 1969 (Victorian Places).



Figure 7. Wales Corner in 1984 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler13511).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Wales Corner at 221-231 Collins Street is a 16-storey commercial building located at the south-west corner of Swanston and Collins streets. This is a prominent site in central Melbourne and the building has frontages to both main streets. Constructed in 1964-66 to a design by Stephenson and Turner, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is rectangular in plan with a broad frontage to Collins Street. To the south of the main tower is a low-rise section of building with roof garden at first floor level, fronting Swanston Street, and a four-storey section to the rear (west). Monaghan Place provides access to the south side of the building from Flinders Lane. An arcade, accessed from Swanston Street, is located below the roof garden. Tower facades are glazed, with the exception of the solid west façade and the western portion of the north façade which are faced with reconstructed stone and enclose the service core at the western end of the building.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction with curtain wall facades to the north, east and south. Reconstructed stone-faced mullions and fine horizontal members divide the glazed facades into a regular grid-like pattern by framing rectangular bays of aluminium-framed windows and metal spandrel panels. A simple parapet and corner piers, set flush with the grid-like surface, frame the glazed facades. The reduced height first-floor level, directly above the street canopy, is treated in a contrasting manner to the façade above, with broader window sets and a reduced number of vertical mullions providing a visual base to the building.



At the ground level, a canopy with broad fascia lines both the principal facades to Collins and Swanston streets. It appears that this has replaced, or obscures, an earlier cantilevered canopy which was lighter in appearance. An additional canopy has been placed at the western end of the Collins Street façade.

### **INTEGRITY**

Wales Corner, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1964-66. Works to the building at street level have altered the original design.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

Wales Corner at 221-231 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. Located on a prominent corner site and set on a podium base, the building's three grid-like glazed curtain wall facades of alternating rows of aluminium-framed glazing and metal spandrels, each divided by broad reconstructed stone-faced mullions and fine horizontal members, can be clearly observed from both Collins and Swanston streets. Despite the redesign of the street-level facades, the upper facades of Wales Corner remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to Wales Corner. These are detailed below.

#### **State-significant places**

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

#### **Locally-significant places**

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

# Precinct Heritage Overlay



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):





Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)





Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kollé & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)





Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street  
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William  
Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street  
(Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation  
Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart &  
McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird  
& Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen  
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)





Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)

## Analysis

As a fine and highly representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, Wales Corner at 221-231 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a number of other examples identified above – Wales Corner clearly demonstrates this class of place.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Building Application Index (BAI), City of Melbourne.

Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.

Butler, Graeme (1983), *Twentieth Century Architecture and Works of Victoria* (also titled *Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects*), Selected Data Sheets Vol 2, prepared for the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

Butler, Graeme (1985), *Melbourne Central Activities District Conservation Study*, Building Citations and Building Identification Forms (accessed via Heritage Victoria's Hermes database).

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National Archives of Australia (NAA), photo collection, images and photographers as cited.

*The Age*.

Victorian Places, 'Wales Corner, 368 Collins Street, Melbourne, 1969',  
<<https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/node/64330>>, accessed October 2019.

Willis, Julie (2012), 'Stephenson & Turner' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985**

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993**

Ungraded

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**Review of Heritage  
overlay listings in the  
CBD 2002**

Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**

Ungraded

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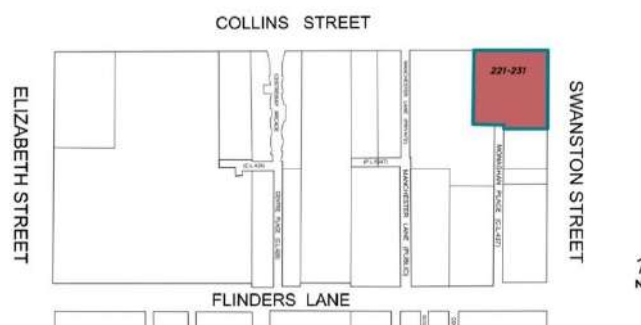


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## Heritage Place: Wales Corner



PS ref no: HOXXXX



## What is significant?

Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1964-66.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facades are not significant.

## How it is significant?

Wales Corner at 221-231 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

## Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1964-66 to a design by Stephenson & Turner, Wales Corner has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

Wales Corner is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 16-storey building on a prominent corner in Collins Street, Wales Corner clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s structure, including a solid exterior of three grid-like glazed curtain wall facades containing alternating rows of

glazing and solid spandrels, broad dividing mullions and fine horizontal members, a podium base and the use of materials such as metal spandrel cladding, aluminium framed windows and reconstructed stone facing. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

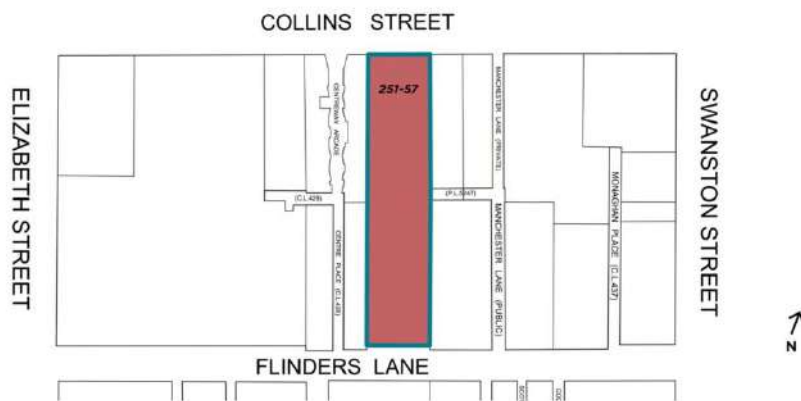
**Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building [also known as Emirates House (current name)]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	251-257 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102083



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO502 (fronting Collins St) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane)
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Non-contributory
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Bates Smart & McCutcheon	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Not known
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1971-1973

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Bank
1920s	Bank
1960s	Bank, Caretaker

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The multi-storey office building, extending from Collins Street to Flinders Lane, was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon to serve as the Melbourne offices of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Ltd. The building was constructed in 1971-1973.



## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

The multi-storey building, extending from Collins Street to Flinders Lane, was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon to serve as the Melbourne offices of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Ltd (CBCS).

The Bank of Victoria purchased 251 Collins Street in 1859, constructing a bank by 1862. The Bank of Victoria merged with CBCS in 1927, soon after which a new building was constructed behind the 1862 façade. This building, also designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, was demolished in 1971 for the present building (NTAV, VHD; *Cross-Section*, March 1970).

The major designer on the project was Bates Smart & McCutcheon's Robert Bruce (Goad 2004:205).<sup>1</sup> In March 1970, the University of Melbourne's publication *Cross-Section* reported on the intended \$10 million, 16-storey state headquarters for CBCS. The building was constructed in 1971-73 (BAP; Goad 2004:205).

The architectural drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated 1969, show the multi-storey tower to Collins Street and the low-scale section fronting Flinders Lane (Figure 1 - Figure 3). Goad

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<sup>1</sup> Goad appears to erroneously address the subject site as 250 Collins Street throughout the 2004 publication.

described the building's design (drawing similarities to Bates Smart & McCutcheon's design of 363-371 Collins Street) as having a 'strong horizontal emphasis that indicated graphic trabeated construction' and glazing set back deeply from the face of the building, which were 'clear expressions of structure' (Goad 2004:205). At ground level, Goad noted, the tower broke the line of the 'street wall' in favour of the current Melbourne City Council building regulations for mini-plazas. The multi-level banking chamber 'took advantage of pedestrian movement between Flinders Lane and Collins Street', essentially continuing Melbourne's network of lanes and arcades within the building itself (Goad 2004:205). The exterior was clad with 'reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall units' (*Architect* Jul-Aug 1973).

Photographs dating to 1973 and 1974 show the completed building (Figures 5-9). In 2019 the building is called Emirates House (ComMaps).

### **Bates Smart & McCutcheon, architects**

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon was formed when Osborn McCutcheon joined the existing firm of Bates & Smart in 1926. Bates & Smart had itself been born out of previous iterations of a firm that could be traced back to Reed & Barnes, making it one of the oldest practices in the country (Goad 2012:72). By the 1960s the firm had become one of Australia's largest architectural firms. It exists today as Bates Smart (Goad 2012:72).

During the 1930s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had earned a reputation for designing Georgian-style residences, but also went on to win RVIA awards for their work on the AMP Building in Collins Street (1926-31), Buckley & Nunn Building in Bourke Street (now David Jones, 1933), and the Second Church of Christ Scientist in Camberwell (1936-37).

By the 1950s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had become Australia's 'expert' in high-rise office buildings design (Goad 2012:73). Much of their work at this time was large structures with glass curtain walls. In Melbourne this was exemplified by ICI House, which broke the city's existing 132-foot (40m) height limit in 1955-8 (Goad 2012:73). Other work completed by the firm in the 1950s included the first of the Sleigh Buildings at 158-172 Queen Street, Melbourne (1953-55 & 1964), Union House at 43-51 Queen Street, Melbourne (1957) and the AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne (1956-58).

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon continued to expand into the 1960s and 70s, with its design approach shifting from glazed curtain walls to facades of artificial stone or prefabricated concrete panels. Works in Melbourne during this period included AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, Bourke Street (1965-69) in association with US firm, Skidmore Owings and Merrill; the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61); the South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street (1961-62) and the Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67) with F C Armstrong.

In the 1970s the firm designed the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne (c1972-75); the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73) and the double tower and plaza complex of Collins Place, Collins Street (1970-80), undertaken in collaboration with international architecture practice, I M Pei. Other notable works by the firm include the large collaborative designs of Melbourne Central with Kisho Kurokawa (1983-92) and Federation Square with Lab Architecture Studio (1997-2002) (Goad 2012:74).

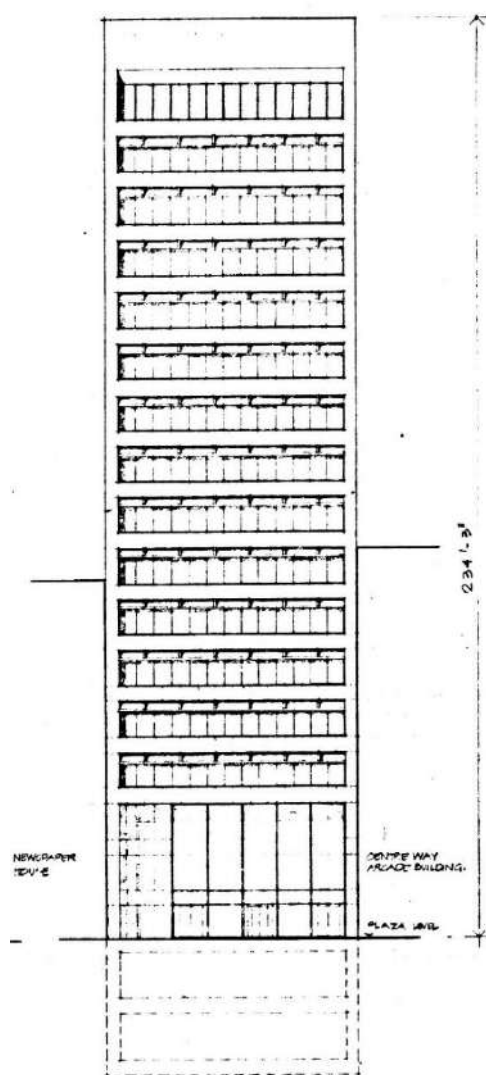


Figure 1. North elevation, fronting Collins Street.  
Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated May 1969 (BAP).

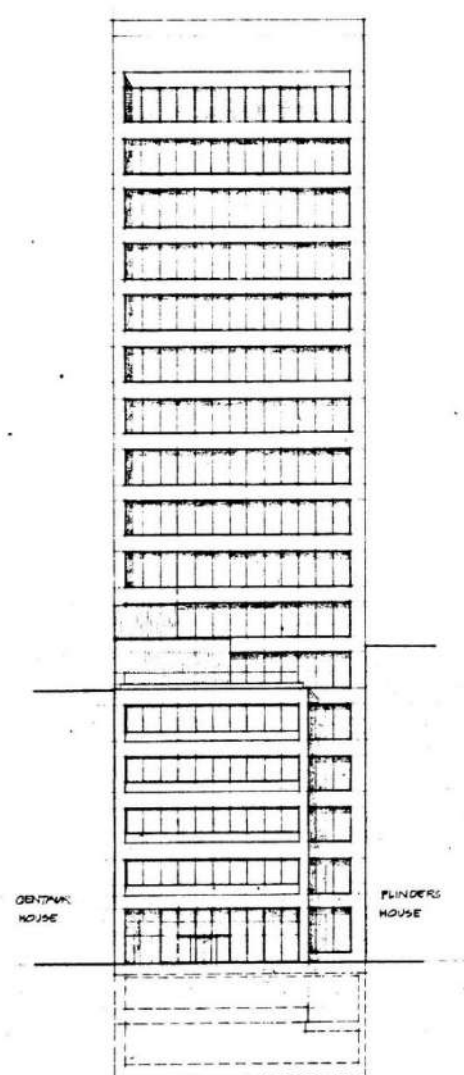


Figure 2. South elevation, fronting Flinders Lane.  
Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated May 1969 (BAP).



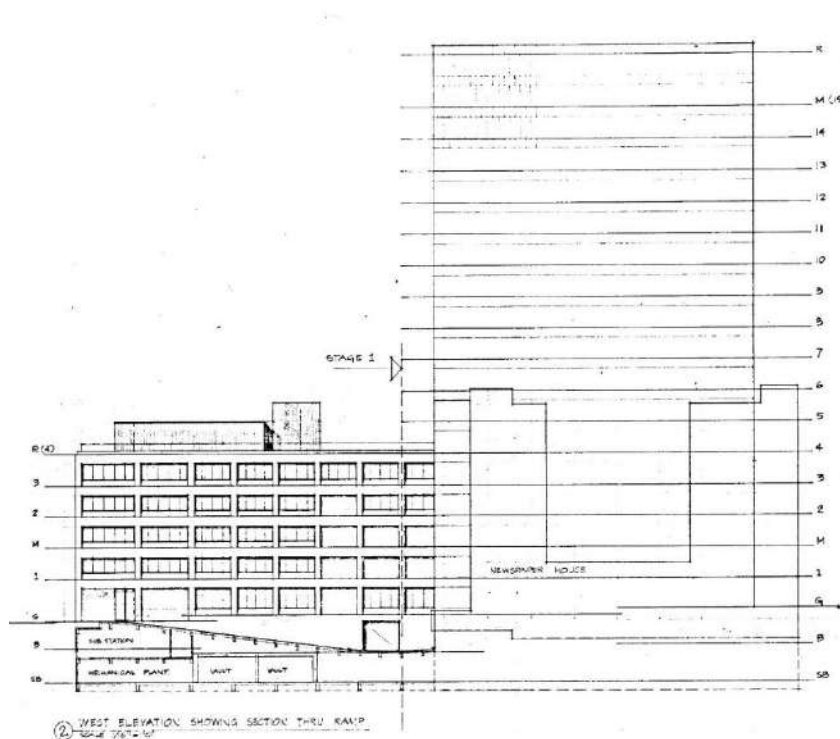


Figure 3. West elevation, showing a section through the ramp. Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated May 1969 (BAP).



Figure 4. Construction at the subject site, c1972 (SLV, K. J Halla, photographer, Image H36133/537).

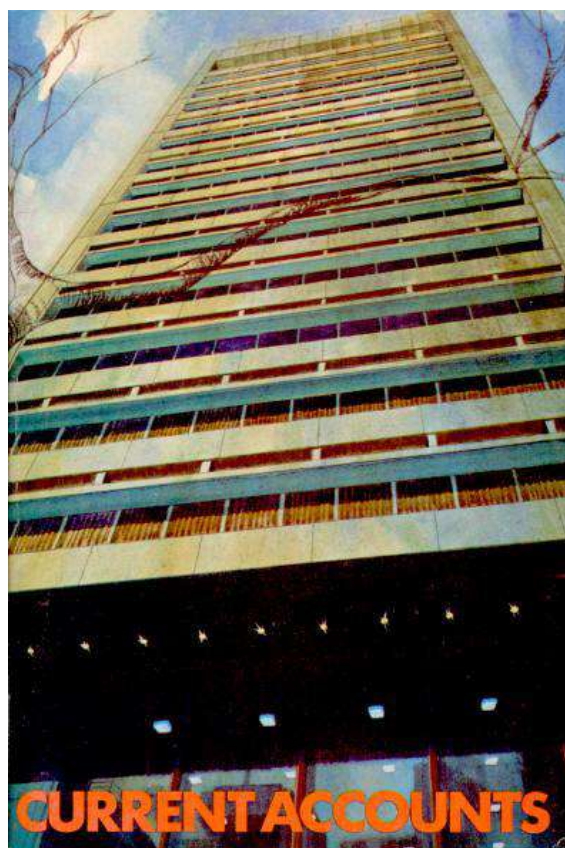


Figure 5. Illustration of the building, published in the 1973 CBC Sydney publication *Current Accounts*.

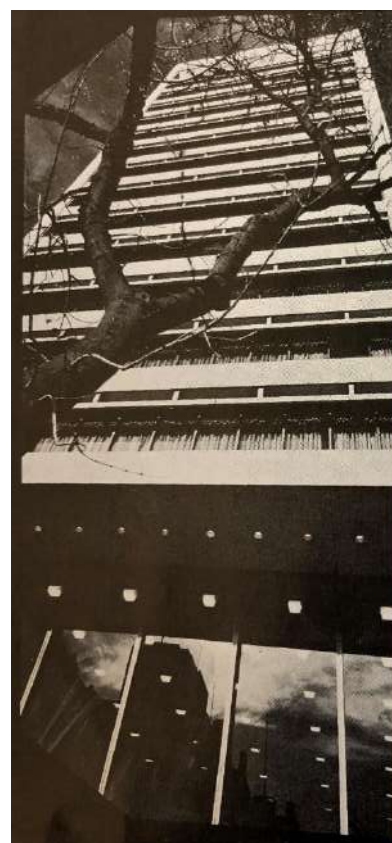


Figure 6. Image of the building published in the July-August 1973 issue of *Architect*, advertising reconstructed granite cladding by Melocco (*Architect*, Jul-Aug 1973).



Figure 7. The Collins Street elevation of the completed building; no date to photo (Goad 2004:209).



Figure 8. Collins Street entrance, photo dated 1973 (NLA, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, object 3064580).



Figure 9. Photo published in January 1974, of the Trading Bank area on the first floor (*Current Accounts*, Jan 1974).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street is a 15-storey commercial building located on the south side of Collins Street between Elizabeth and Swanston Streets. Constructed from 1971-73 to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Of rectangular plan with narrow frontages to Collins Street and Flinders Lane to the south, the building is accessible from both frontages. The building is set back from Collins Street – a feature for which additional height to the building was allowed. There are no side setbacks; however the main tower has a substantial setback from Flinders Lane, with an additional low-rise section of building fronting the latter. An access lane from Flinders Lane (Flinders Way) flanks the eastern side of this low-rise component and leads to the rear of the main tower.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction, with the structural system clearly expressed on the identically detailed north and south facades. These walls have deeply



recessed bands of windows behind rows of reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall units with suspended sunhoods, and a heavy crowning parapet with splayed underside. Concrete floor slabs extend beyond the line of the windows to support the precast elements, creating a structural, rather than curtain wall, façade. The strongly horizontal elements of the facades are framed by the solid vertical faces of the side walls which present unadorned facades above the adjacent buildings.

The detailing of the Flinders Street façade of the low-rise portion of building at the rear is simpler than that of the tower. Maintaining a strong horizontal emphasis, it comprises splayed-top precast concrete spandrels which alternate with rows of glazing.

A double-storey structure has recently been built across the lower Collins Street façade at ground level, utilising the original setback of the multi-storey building. This double-height addition contains two shopfronts and a central entrance to the main tower, all set below a fine projecting canopy. At the rear, a simple canopy and shopfront have been inserted below the lower splayed-top spandrel, with a recessed entrance to the building on the western side.

## INTEGRITY

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1971-73. Recent additions to the Collins Street and Flinders Lane frontages of the building at street level have altered the original design at the base of the building.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. Clearly expressing the internal structure, the building has identically detailed front and rear structural facades, with horizontal bands of precast concrete wall units with integral sunhoods, deeply recessed bands of windows and heavy splayed parapet. Despite modifications to the lower Collins Street façade, the upper facades of the building remain highly intact to their original design and can be clearly observed from Collins Street.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)

- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)





Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kelle, 1969)





Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street  
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William  
Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street  
(Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building,  
359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,  
c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan  
Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen  
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)





Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)

### Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist office building, the Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey office buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to a number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings listed above, the subject building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

*Architect*, July-August 1973.

Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.

City of Melbourne Maps (CoMMaps), Site Details.

*Cross-Section*: No. 208, March 1970.

*Current Accounts* [CBC Sydney publication], (1973 & 1974), via CBC Officers Club, 'Melbourne office, 257 Collins Street, Melbourne', <<http://www.cbcbank.com.au/images/Branches/VIC/VIC%20Melb%20Office.htm>> accessed 23 October 2019.

Goad, Philip's 'Moderate Modernism, 1945-77' in Goad, Philip & Bates Smart (Firm) (2004), Bates Smart : 150 years of Australian architecture, Fishermans Bend [Vic], pp146-213.

Goad, Philip (2012), 'Bates Smart & McCutcheon' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

National Library of Australia (NLA), images and photographers as cited.

National Trust of Australia, Victoria (NTAV) Victorian Heritage Database (VHD) record, <<https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/>>, accessed 23 October 2019:

'Former Bank of Victoria, 251 Collins Street, MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY'

State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, images and photographers as cited.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 1993</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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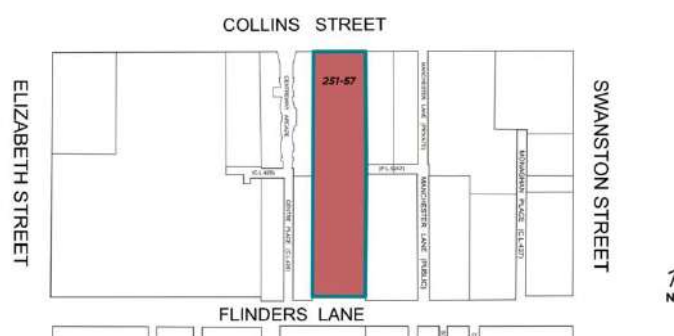


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1971-73.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facades are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1971-73, to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 15-storey building in Collins Street, the Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar structure including identically detailed front and

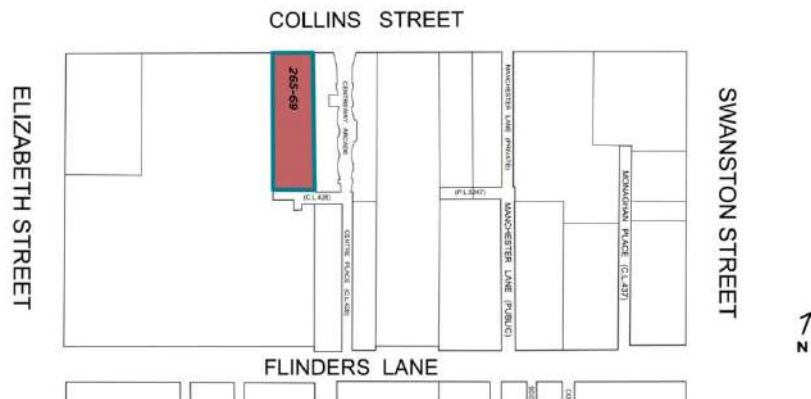
rear structural facades which clearly express the structure externally, wall cladding with integral suspended sunhoods shading deeply recessed bands of continuous glazing, strong horizontal lines across the facades and the use of materials such as precast concrete panels. These details demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

**Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)

<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Bank of Adelaide Building
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	265-269 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102085



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO502
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Contributory
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb	<b>BUILDER:</b>	E A Watts Pty Lt
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1959-1960

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Bank, Office, Studio, Retail, Residence
1920s	Bank, Office, Retail/Service, Studio, Caretaker
1960s	Bank

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building was designed by architects and engineers Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb to serve as the Melbourne headquarters for the Bank of Adelaide. It was constructed in 1959-1960 by E A Watts Pty Ltd.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.



### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

### **SITE HISTORY**

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building was designed by architects and engineers Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb to serve as the Melbourne headquarters for the Bank of Adelaide (BAP; *Cross-Section*, May 1959:3). It was constructed in 1959-1960 by E A Watts Pty Ltd (*Cross-Section*, May 1959:3; *Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).

The Bank of Adelaide had occupied the site of the existing building from 1920 (S&Mc; *Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1). In August 1958 the bank announced its temporary residency at 319 Collins Street, during the demolition of the bank's old premises and construction of a new building at the site (*Age*, 16 Aug 1958:4). The earlier building was demolished in September 1958 (*Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).

Architectural drawings dated October 1958 show the north (Collins Street) elevation and the design of the original entrance with its glazed aluminium entrance screen and granite facing surrounds.

Annotations to the drawings indicate that the north elevation was designed as an 'anodised aluminium curtain wall' with marble spandrels, stone surrounds and granite edging. The stairwell at the east side of the façade was designed with fixed glazing and marble spandrels (Figure 1). The layout placed the

banking chamber on the ground floor, bank offices on the first floor, and office spaces to let on the remaining floors (Figure 2) (BAP).

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the new building in January 1959 (with an estimated total cost of £570,000) (BAI). The development was subsequently discussed in contemporary newspapers and architectural publications. The *Age* reported in April 1959 that construction of the 11-storey building had commenced (Figure 3) stating,

*The new building, one of the most modern occupied by a bank in Melbourne, will take advantage of the recent modifications in the building code, and will cover the maximum area permitted on a site of its size.*

The article stated that, at 154 feet tall, the building was to be the first building in the central city area to exceed the old height limit of 132 feet (40m) (*Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).

In May 1959, the University of Melbourne publication *Cross-Section* reported on the new Melbourne headquarters for the Bank of Adelaide that was under construction. It noted that the building would be Victoria's first major building using concrete with a light-weight aggregate (*Cross-Section*, May 1959:3). The new lightweight aggregate, 'Shalite', produced structural concrete to specified strength and almost half the weight. The aggregate was used on various contemporary buildings including the subject site (*Age*, 4 May 1960:9).

The groundfloor shopfront has been altered at various stages (Figure 6).

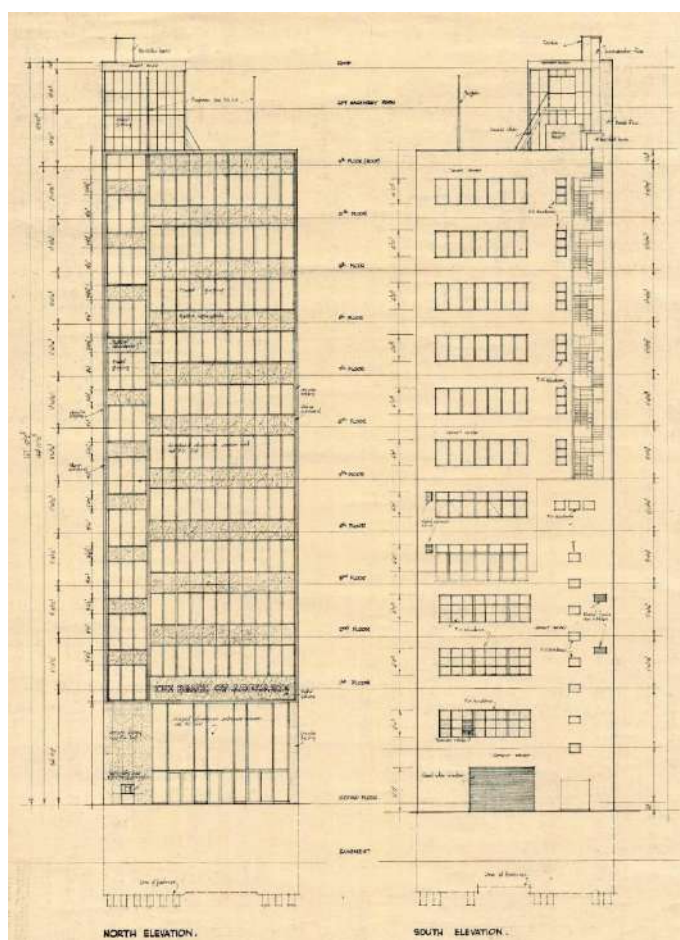


Figure 1. North (Collins Street) and south elevations. Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated October 1958 (BAP).

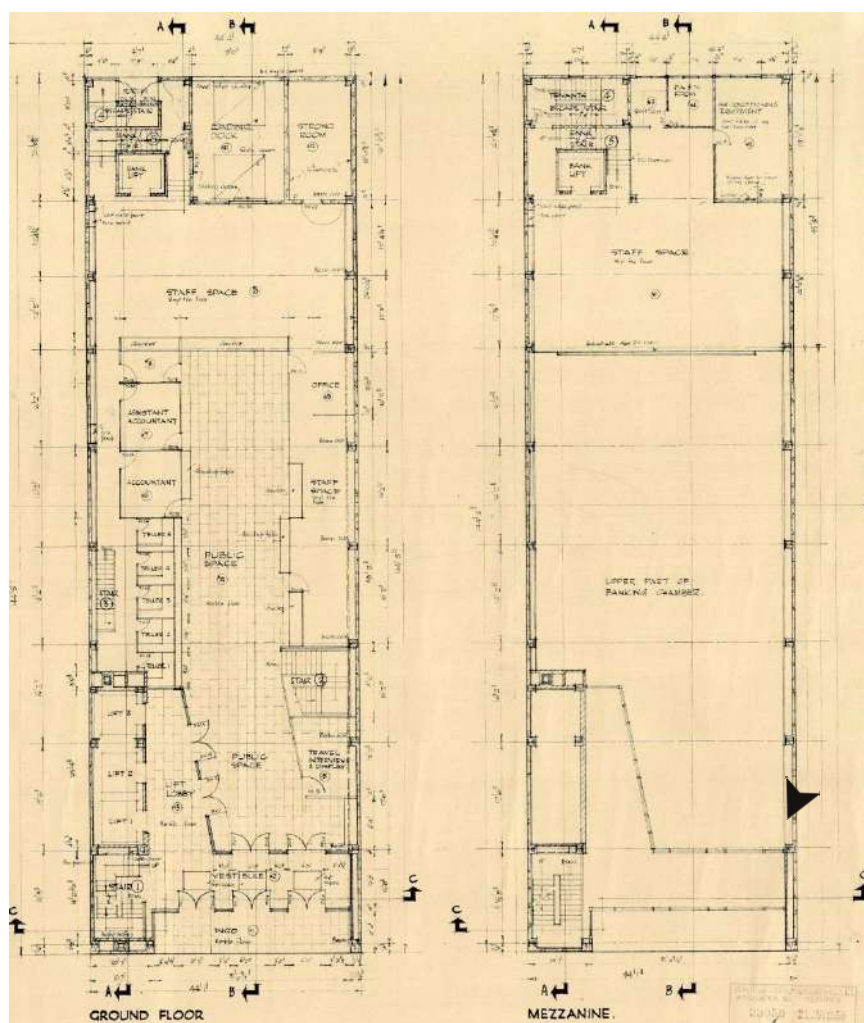


Figure 2. Ground and mezzanine floor plans, occupied by the bank. Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated October 1958 (BAP).

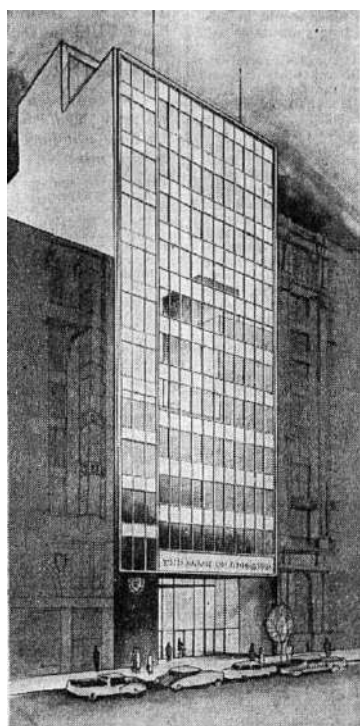


Figure 3. Illustration of the building, published in *The Age* in April 1959 (*Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).





Figure 4. Bank of Adelaide in 1960 (SLV, Mark Strizic, photographer, Image H2011.55/1445).



Figure 5. Detail of a photo taken 1960 (SLV, Mark Strizic, photographer, Image H2011.55/1462).



Figure 6. The building in 1984 with an altered ground floor shopfront (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler13528).

**Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, architects**

Godfrey and Spowers was established in c1901 by architects, William Scott Purves Godfrey and Henry Howard Spowers. The firm designed a large number of houses, warehouses and institutional buildings and was best known for its bank building designs.

Godfrey's son, William Purves Race Godfrey, joined the practice in 1931 as a student. Spowers died the following year and Race Godfrey was made partner in c1934. The firm was suspended in 1941 as a direct result of World War II, during which time Race Godfrey worked with the RAAF as a civilian architect in Melbourne and Sydney and his father, William Godfrey, carried out commissions for air-raid shelters. Race Godfrey recommenced practice late in 1944. His father did not continue with the new firm, and retired from practice in the same year.

By the early 1950s, Race Godfrey expanded the firm to include new partners, Eric Hughes, Geoffrey Mewton and John Lobb, becoming Godfrey, Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb. The expanded firm specialised in large office and institutional buildings. Notable commissions within central Melbourne included the Allans Building at 278 Collins Street (1959), the Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-69 Collins Street (1959-60), the AMP Building, 344-50 Collins Street (1966-68) and the State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-43 Queen Street (1967-68). The National Mutual Building, Collins Street, Melbourne (1962-5, demolished 2015) was a key work for the firm during this period.

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street is an 11-storey commercial building located on the south side of Collins Street between Elizabeth Street and Swanston Street. Constructed in 1959-60 to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Rectangular in plan, the building has a narrow frontage to Collins Street and rear access is via a laneway from Flinders Lane. The Modernist design of the Collins Street façade is emphasised by the substantial classically-inspired early twentieth century buildings which flank the building. Located on the opposite side of Collins Street is the similarly Modernist-styled Allans Building which was designed by the same architects in 1956-57.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with the Collins Street façade presenting as a tall, narrow and transparent curtain wall of anodised aluminium framing with alternating rows of fixed glazing and solid spandrels. Stone surrounds frame the individual window and spandrel panels, forming continuous vertical and horizontal lines across the front façade.

Unlike the majority of glazed curtain wall buildings of the period, the front facade combines two curtain wall sections which vary in dimension and create an asymmetrical composition. An internal staircase to the east is distinguished from the remainder of the front facade by the use of smaller spandrels which align with the centre of the window banding of the main curtain wall, creating a subtle staggered effect. Original architectural drawings indicate that the spandrel panels were to be clad in marble. It is difficult to identify the material used in the main spandrels and it appears that the smaller spandrel panels to the east may have been re-clad.

Continuous vertical elements run from above street level to the top of the building across the entire façade, creating a grid-like pattern between slim granite-clad concrete side walls and the top parapet which frames the composition. In both sections of curtain walling, the alternating horizontal bands are



of different height, with taller window bands resulting in rectangular glazed units and spandrels of square proportion.

The rear wall of the building is of cement rendered concrete and contains a number of fixed window units.

Modifications have been made to the front façade below the first-floor strip of glazing. This includes removal of the original glazed entrance screen, granite facing and first floor spandrel. Recent framing has been inserted into this façade at street level.

## INTEGRITY

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building, including the original form and detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction of 1959-60. Works to the front of the building at street level has altered the original design of this frontage.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey office building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1950s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's transparent grid-like curtain wall façade, with alternating rows of aluminium-framed glazing and opaque spandrels and vertical mullions, can be clearly observed from Collins Street. The curtain wall façade is unusually divided into two unequal vertical parts – both comprising alternating rows of fixed glazing and opaque spandrels, and stone framing which forms a grid of continuous vertical and horizontal lines across the two individual sections of the front façade. Despite the redesign of the façade at street level, the upper facades of the Former Bank of Adelaide Building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Bank of Adelaide Building. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

### Locally-significant places

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those from the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1956-1957) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

### *Other Examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:





Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (B Evans & Partners, 1960) (Interim HO1006).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).

### Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of its type, the Former Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – the Former Bank of Adelaide Building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).



**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Building Application Index (BAI), City of Melbourne.

Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.

City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, reference nos. as cited.

*Cross-Section*: No. 79, May 1959.

Goad, Phillip, Ed. (2003), *Judging Architecture*, Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Victoria).

Murphy, Guy & Bryce Raworth (2012), 'Godfrey & Spowers' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

National Trust of Australia, Victoria (NTAV) (September 2014), *Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism, A Comparative Analysis of Post-War Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD 1955 -1975*.

Sands & McDougall Directories (S&Mc).

State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, images and photographers as cited.

*The Age*.

**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	E
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 1993</b>	C
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<b>Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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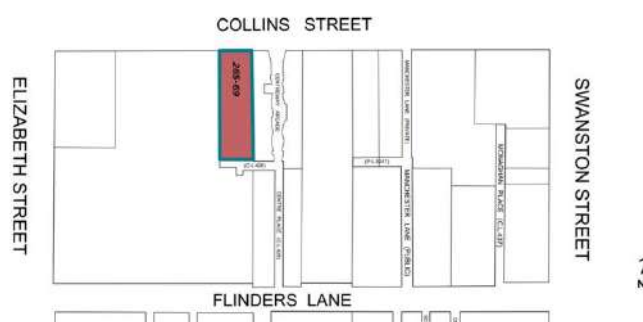
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Bank of Adelaide Building



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1959-60.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facade are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Former Bank of Adelaide at 265-269 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1959-60, to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, the Former Bank of Adelaide Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and prestige afforded by a dominant city presence. The Former Bank of Adelaide Building was constructed as one of the first buildings to exceed the pre-existing 40m (132 foot) height limit within the Melbourne CBD (Criterion A).

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne, incorporating a curtain wall street facade. The transparent front façade of alternating rows of aluminium-framed glazing and opaque spandrels, and vertical mullions which divide the façade into a grid-like pattern, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style. The incorporation of two contrasting grids in the front façade is unusual and distinctive (Criterion D).

#### **Primary source**

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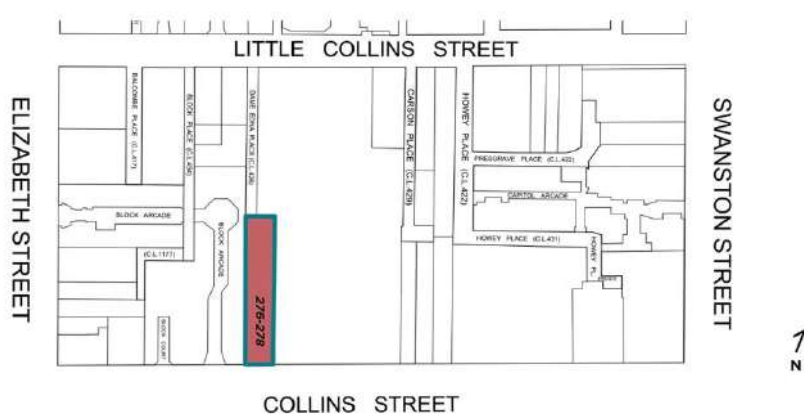
Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)



**SITE NAME** Former Allans Building [also known as Mering House (current name)]

**STREET ADDRESS** 276-278 Collins Street, Melbourne

**PROPERTY ID** 102142



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** H7822-1747

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** HO502

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER CATEGORY** Significant

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed

**BUILDER:** Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1956-1957

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.3 Retail decline and revitalisation in the city centre

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail, Education
1920s	Retail
1960s	Retail, Merchant, Hairdresser, Office, Education, Library, Caretaker

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The Former Allans Building was designed by architects and engineers, Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, in association with architect Charles N Hollinshed, for the well-known music retailers and publishers of sheet music, Allans & Co Pty Ltd. The building was constructed in 1956-1957.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Retail decline and revitalisation in the city centre**

Central Melbourne and Central Sydney accounted for approximately one third of Australian metropolitan retail sales in the 1950s. However, the 1950s saw city retailers increasingly struggle to attract consumers from the suburbs, largely due to the increase in car ownership in the postwar period. To counteract this, in 1953 Myer Ltd erected the first multi-storey carpark to be built since World War II in Lonsdale Street. Another carpark, the Grand Central Carpark, opened in Bourke Street soon afterwards (Heritage Alliance 2008:16).

Suburban development and the construction of suburban shopping complexes such as Chadstone Shopping Centre also had a major impact on Melbourne's city centre into the 1960s with traditional businesses including shops, manufacturing and professional services moving to new suburban locations (Spearritt cited in Marsden 2000:49). Several city department stores closed and were demolished or converted to other uses. The Eastern Market (located at the corner of Bourke and Exhibition streets) was demolished in 1960 to make way for the Southern Cross Hotel (Marsden 2000:49).

Some inner-city retailing persisted in this period with Allans and Co opening a new music store at 276-278 Collins Street in 1957 and Myer constructing the Department Aerial Crossover, a four-storey pedestrian bridge over Little Bourke Street designed by longtime Myer architects Tompkins, Shaw and Evans (1963) (Lewis et al 1993:264).

Alliances between government ministers, councillors and traders sought to halt the decline of retail in the Melbourne city centre. Two main strategies emerged: to expedite car access and, from the 1970s, to encourage pedestrians through, for example, the creation of car-free malls, Sunday trading, and the establishment of open-air markets (Marsden 2000:51-52).

In an effort to revive the city's waning retail economy, a trial closure of Bourke Street between Swanston and Elizabeth streets was introduced in late 1973. This followed discussions between MCC and the Retail Trader's Association. The trial resulted in protests from shop keepers and caused traffic chaos (May 2008c). The 1974 Strategy Plan pursued the concept, encouraging 'the maintenance and growth of the retail areas as the major centre for shopping for the metropolitan area' (City of Melbourne 1974:267), but it was February 1978 before the section was formally closed to through traffic. Policies within the Strategy Plan also aimed to counteract:

*present economic market forces that would force entertainment and retail activities out of the CBD. The mandatory requirements for retail or entertainment floor space will ensure that the variety provided by shops, restaurants or cinemas is maintained* (Interplan for CoM 1974:267).

### **SITE HISTORY**

The Former Allans Building was designed by architects and engineers, Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, in association with architect Charles N Hollinshed, for owners Allan & Co Pty Ltd, music retailers and publishers of sheet music (BAP; *Argus*, 5 May 1956:3). The builders were Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd (AIA, Dec 1959:135).

George Leavis Allan (1826-1897) was a singing teacher and musical pioneer in Melbourne. He was born in London but the lure of gold led him to Melbourne in 1852. After a short stint in the goldfields, Allan returned to Melbourne in 1853 to capitalise on his musical expertise, establishing himself as a

well-respected singing teacher. In 1863 Allan joined the musical warehouse of Wilkie & Webster (est. 1850), forming Wilkie, Webster & Allan, and in 1875 he became the sole proprietor of the business. By 1877 it was the largest musical warehouse in the southern hemisphere. His son George became partner in 1881 when the name of the company was formally changed to Allan & Co. The business remained in the Allan family for many generations (Hince 1969; *Argus*, 25 Jun 1932:6). In 1976 the company was taken over by Brash Holdings, however the instrument sales department emerged from the liquidation of Brash's as a separate company in 1998 (May, 2008). Allan's merged with Billy Hyde music in 2010.

In June 1956, the City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the building at 276-278 Collins Street, with an estimated total cost of £341,000 (BAI). The building was constructed in 1956-1957 (Goad et al. 1993: 25).

Allan & Co Pty Ltd had occupied the site from at least the 1870s, with an earlier building constructed in 1876 (*Illustrated Australian News*, 27 Dec 1876:204; S&Mc). This earlier building was destroyed by fire and in May 1955 it was subsequently reported that Allan's intended to build a new 10-storey 'Music House' on the same site (*Cross-Section*, May 1955:3, Jun 1956:2; *Argus* 11 May 1955:1).

The present building is a glass curtain walled office and retail building, which was built to the 40m (132 foot) height limit in place at the time (NTAV 2014:17). The architectural drawings dated April 1956 indicate that the façade was designed with 'terracotta facing' to the vertical strips extending up the sides of the façade and metal-framed windows (Figure 1 - Figure 3).

In May 1956, *The Argus* reported that the new building was to comprise 11 floors and a basement. The lower floors were to be occupied by the music store, with the upper floors to be let. The article reported that the 'front of the building will be faced with aluminium panels between aluminium windows. The ground and first floor were to have a 'full glass front', and include acoustically treated ceilings, heating, a giant piano showroom and television display centre (*Argus*, 5 May 1956:3). The completed building is at Figure 4 to Figure 7.

Allans occupied the building until at least c1982 (S&Mc). In 2019 the building is called Mering House (ComMaps).

### **Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, architects**

Godfrey and Spowers was established in c1901 by architects, William Scott Purves Godfrey and Henry Howard Spowers. The firm designed a large number of houses, warehouses and institutional buildings and was best known for its bank building designs.

Godfrey's son, William Purves Race Godfrey, joined the practice in 1931 as a student. Spowers died the following year and Race Godfrey was made partner in c1934. The firm was suspended in 1941 as a direct result of World War II, during which time Race Godfrey worked with the RAAF as a civilian architect in Melbourne and Sydney and his father, William Godfrey, carried out commissions for air-raid shelters. Race Godfrey recommenced practice late in 1944. His father did not continue with the new firm, and retired from practice in the same year.

By the early 1950s, Race Godfrey expanded the firm to include new partners, Eric Hughes, Geoffrey Mewton and John Lobb, becoming Godfrey, Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb. The expanded firm specialised in large office and institutional buildings. Notable commissions within central Melbourne included the Allans Building at 278 Collins Street (1959), the Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-69 Collins Street (1959-60), the AMP Building, 344-50 Collins Street (1966-68) and the State Savings



Bank of Victoria, 233-43 Queen Street (1967-68). The National Mutual Building, Collins Street, Melbourne (1962-5, demolished 2015) was a key work for the firm during this period.

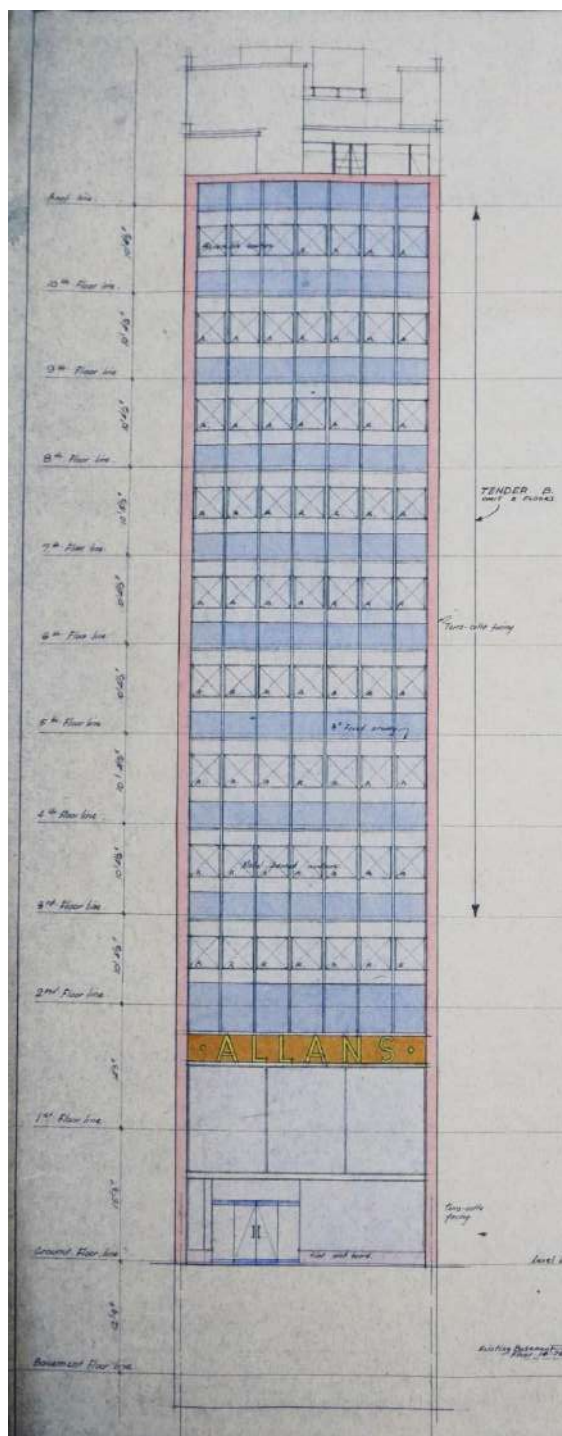


Figure 1. South elevation to Collins Street. Drawing by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, in association with Charles N Hollinshed, dated April 1956 (BAP).

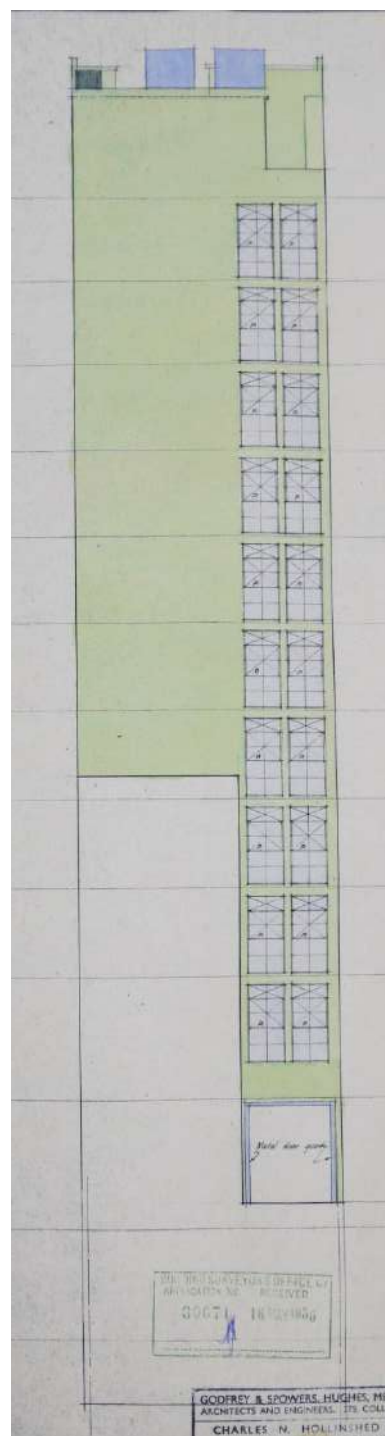


Figure 2. North elevation. Drawing by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, in association with Charles N Hollinshed, dated April 1956 (BAP).

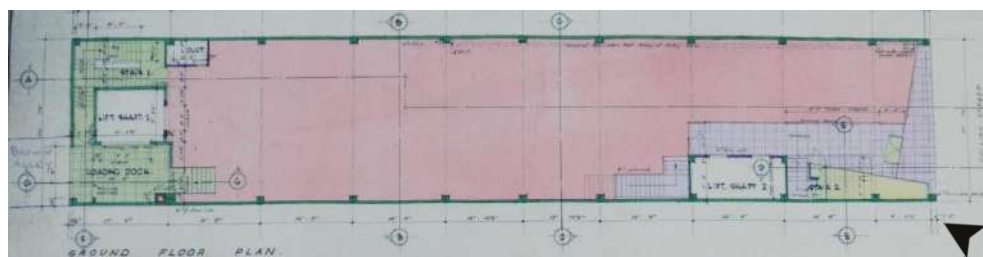


Figure 3. Ground floor plan, Collins Street at right. Drawing by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, in association with Charles N Hollinshed, dated April 1956 (BAP).

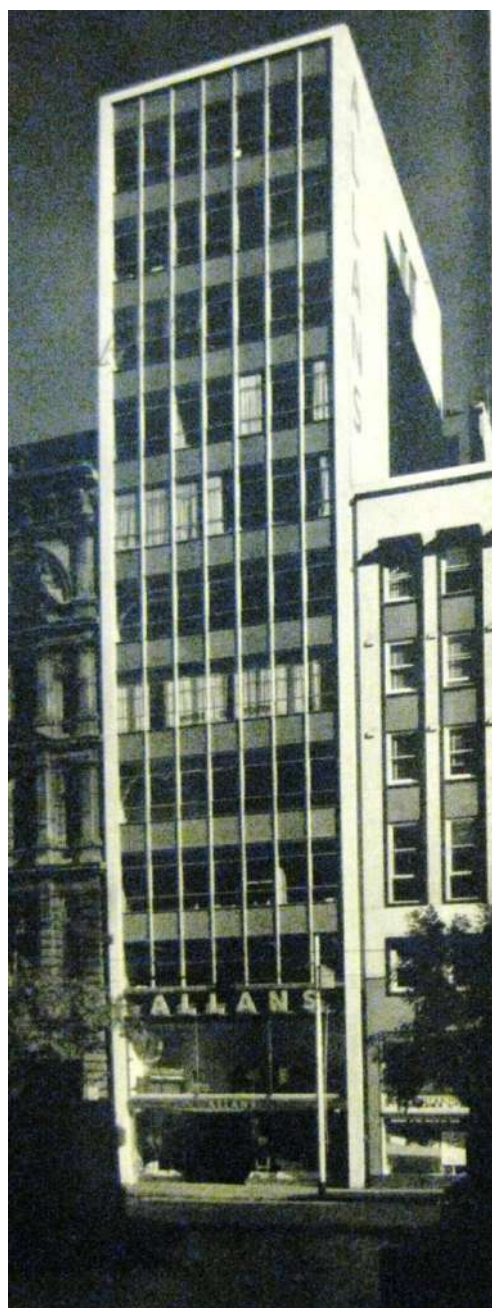


Figure 4. Allans Building, photo published in 1959 (Saunders, 1959:90).

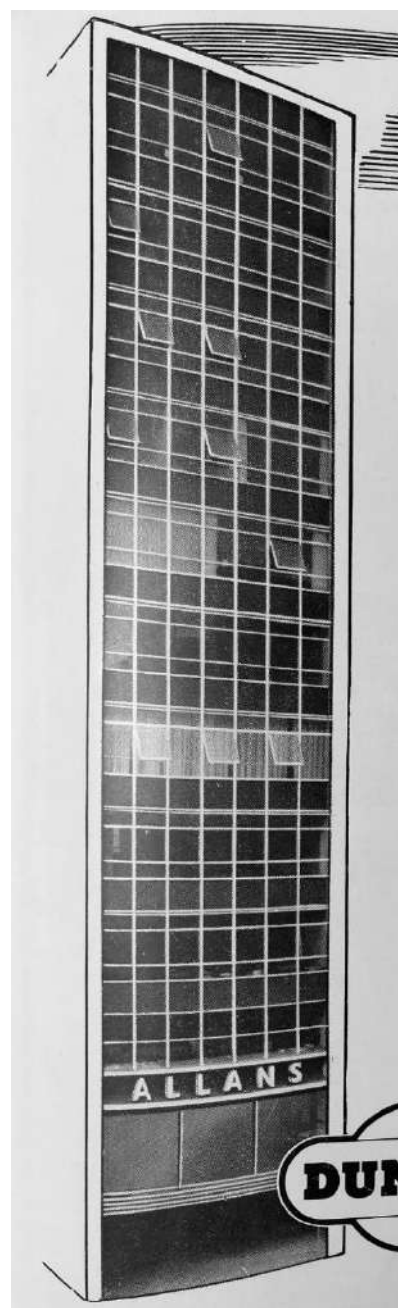


Figure 5. Illustration of the newly completed building published in *Architecture in Australia* in March 1960, advertising Dunlop Rubber Flooring, used throughout the building (AIA, Mar 1960:9).



Figure 6. Photo of the completed building published in *Architecture in Australia* in December 1959.



Figure 7. Allans Music store in 1982 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Graeme Butler, photographer, Reference no. Butler16369).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Allans Building at 276-278 Collins Street is an 11-storey commercial building located on the north side of Collins Street between Elizabeth Street and Swanston Street. Constructed in 1956-57 to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, in association with Charles N Hollinshed Associates, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Constructed on a long, narrow site, the Former Allans Building has a minimal frontage of 30 feet (9 metres) to Collins Street. Dame Edna Place provides access to the rear of the building from Little Collins Street. The adjacent building to the east partially wraps around the rear of the building and to the west is the low-rise Block Arcade building, dating from the 1890s. Located on the opposite side of Collins Street is the similarly styled Former Bank of Adelaide which was designed by the same architects as the Former Allans Building in the late 1950s.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with the Collins Street façade presenting as a tall, narrow and transparent curtain wall of metal framing with alternating rows of glazing and opaque red spandrels (possibly glass with applied finish). The rows of glazing contain a central row (openable, reversible sashes indicated on the original drawings) which are the same height as the spandrel panels. Rows of half-sized windows above and below result in dominant bands of glazing across the façade. Together with continuous mullions which run from above street level to the top of the building, these horizontal bands form a grid-like pattern across the whole façade. Concrete side walls and crowning parapet frame the façade.



Side walls of the Former Allans Building are concrete and a large portion of the west façade is visible above the adjacent Block Arcade building. A vertical 'Allans' sign is painted on this wall, above the adjacent façade. A light court, situated on the east side of the building, provides light to the building above the second floor, while the north (rear) façade has been obscured by later building.

At street level, a double-height portion of the front façade was originally recessed behind the line of the building. This area has been extensively modified with the insertion of a glazed shopfront with fine cantilevered awning set between the original side walls.

## INTEGRITY

The Former Allans Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building, remains highly intact from its original construction in 1956-57.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Allans Building at 276-278 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1950s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's transparent grid-like curtain wall façade, with alternating rows of metal-framed glazing and opaque glass spandrels and vertical mullions, can be clearly observed from Collins Street. Despite the redesign of the façade at street level, the upper facades of the Former Allans Building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Allans Building. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

### Locally-significant places

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those from the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



### Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (B Evans & Partners, 1960) (Interim HO1006).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).

**Analysis**

As a fine and highly intact representative example of its type, the Former Allans Building at 276-278 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – the Former Allans Building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
✓	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A



## REFERENCES

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*The Age*.

*The Argus*.

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** C

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** C

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**Review of Heritage  
Overlay Listings in the  
CBD 2002** Ungraded

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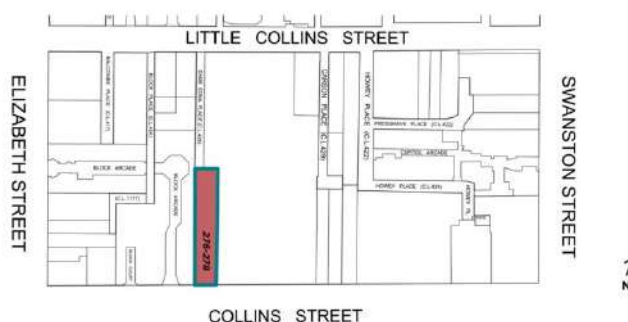
**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Allans Building

**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street, a multi-storey commercial building constructed in 1956-57.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facade are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Former Allans Building at 276-278 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1956-57, to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb in association with Charles N Hollinshed, the Former Allans Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former Allans Building has strong and enduring associations with the development of the music industry in Melbourne. The music dealership, which continuously occupied the site in Collins Street from at least 1876 to c1982, was noted as being the largest in the southern hemisphere by 1877 (Criterion A).

The Former Allans Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed to the prevailing limit-height of 40m (132 feet) at the time, the Former Allans Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1950s structure with a curtain wall façade. The transparent front façade of alternating rows of glazing and opaque glass spandrels, along vertical mullions which divide the facade into a grid-like pattern, and the use of materials such as opaque glass and metal window frames, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

The Former Allans Building has close associations with the Allan family, headed by George Leavis Allan who worked in the music industry in Melbourne from 1853 and established the music business, Allan & Co, with his son in 1881. The Allan family owned the music business through the latter part of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century. The family were significant contributors to the music industry in Melbourne for over 100 years and the family name was synonymous with this industry for a long period (Criterion H).

**Primary source**

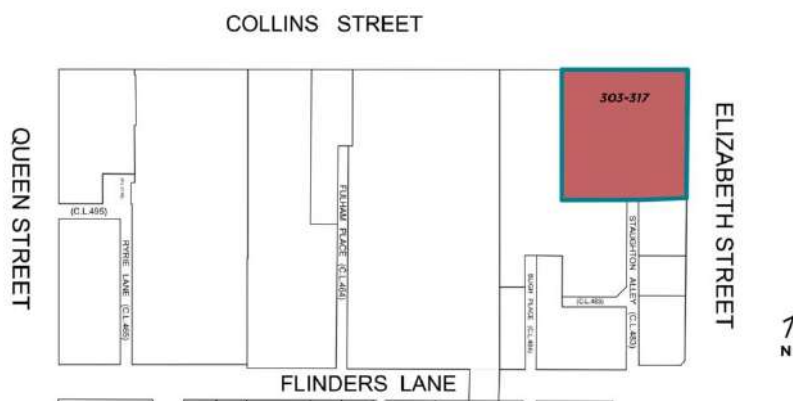
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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)





<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former MLC Building [also known as Royal Bank Plaza and IOOF Centre (current name)]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	303-317 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	110762



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	No
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Ungraded
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Civil and Civic Pty Ltd in association with Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Civil and Civic Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	c1970 - 1973

**THEMES**

<b>ABORIGINAL THEMES</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
<b>POSTWAR THEMES</b>	<b>DOMINANT SUB-THEMES</b>
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

**LAND USE**

<b>THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE</b>	
1890s	Retail, Workshop, Office, Café/Restaurant, Studio, Medical, Education, Caretaker, Carrier
1920s	Workshop, Office, Retail, Hairdresser, Café/Restaurant, Storage, Studio, Carrier, Retail, Caretaker, Trade
1960s	Café/Restaurant, Office, Retail, Studio, Medical, Hairdresser, Merchant, Carrier, Retail/Workshop, Caretaker

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

**SUMMARY**

The building at 303-317 Collins Street, on the south-west corner of Collins and Elizabeth streets, was completed in 1973 as the Melbourne headquarters of the Mutual Life and Citizens Assurance Company Pty Ltd (MLC). Design co-ordination, construction and mechanical and electrical engineering of the building was carried out by Civil and Civic Pty Ltd (the design and construction subsidiary of Lend Lease Corporation Ltd) with architects in association being R. S. Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

The MLC Building, on the south-west corner of Collins and Elizabeth streets, was completed in 1973 for the Mutual Life and Citizens Assurance Company Pty Ltd (MLC) who redeveloped their site, replacing the earlier Melbourne headquarters for the company on the site (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17; *Telegraph*, 30 Mar 1937:8; *Construction*, 29 Mar 1939:6; BAF).

MLC acquired the corner property in 1936, occupying an earlier building on the site from 1938. The company temporarily relocated to the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street in 1969 (which they had previously occupied between 1911 and 1938) during redevelopment of the subject site (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17, 21; S&Mc).

The insurance company MLC was established in Victoria in 1888 as The Citizens' Life Assurance Company, providing life assurance with low premiums to the working man. Previously, life assurance benefits were restricted to the wealthy in Victoria. The company grew rapidly, taking over the Mutual Life Association of Australasia in 1908 and the Australian Widow's Fund Life Assurance Society in 1910. The company became the Mutual Life and Citizens Assurance Company Pty Ltd. By the 1970s there were 19 district and sales offices throughout Victoria (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17). Today, MLC provides life insurance as well as investments, superannuation and financial advice to corporate, institutional and retail customers (MLC, 'About').



The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the 30-storey office building at the site in January 1970 (BAI; BAF). Design co-ordination, construction and mechanical and electrical engineering of the building was carried out by Civil and Civic Pty Ltd (the design and construction subsidiary of Lend Lease Corporation Ltd). The architects in association were R. S. Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton (Goad 2012:199; BAP). In August 1973 *The Age* published a feature on the newly completed building, reporting that the architects in association were 'R S Demaine and Partners', the structural engineers were W J and W L Meinhardt and mechanical engineers in association were Rider Hunt and Partners (architectural plans record Norman & Addicoat as the latter, in 1969) (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17).

Architectural drawings dated 1969 show the north and south elevations and ground floor plan (Figure 1 - Figure 3). The designs included a plaza, basement car parking, ground floor shops, offices and a banking chamber, a first floor theatrette (in the circular section projecting into the plaza) and offices, a 13<sup>th</sup> floor executive level, 15<sup>th</sup> floor caretaker's flat, two plant/motor rooms, and the remainder as offices (BAF; BAP). MLC constructed a temporary building on the site to house the State Savings Bank (whose premises were acquired for the new build) until occupancy was available in the new building (BAF; *Age*, 13 Aug 1973:20).

The building was opened by Premier Rupert Hamer at a special function held on site in August 1973 (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17). The (almost 400ft/122m) high-rise building was completed at a total cost of \$12.5 million. A technique new to Australia, 'rock socketting' was used for the foundations. The building was constructed of precast concrete and clad with re-constituted granite panels (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17-21; AIA, May/Jun 1973). The design requested a facing that would 'produce a subdued but rugged brown effect', the response to which was a natural stone aggregate from Talbot, a mining town near Maryborough, and sandblasting techniques to expose the stone (as the semicircular shape of the building made polishing of panels impracticable). The overall result was a natural look, rather than a contrived or artificial appearance. Each panel was between 2½ to 4 inches (6.3-10cm) thick. A contemporary newspaper article stated that the 'precast cladding is also serving as external formwork, designed to withstand great pressures during placement. In this way the cladding became an integral part of the structure instead of being just "hung on."' Aggregates in the same Talbot quarts were used to finish off the ground floor columns and entrance, this applied finish being 'water washed with a fine spray and then cleaned with acid' (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17-21).

The completed building comprised two basements, ground and 29 upper floors, a spacious forecourt with a circular rotunda and fountain, and an 'unusual semi-circular shape with circular lift-tower at the rear' and sill-to-ceiling aluminum-framed windows on all elevations, and a theatrette. The high-rise building was also fitted with the fastest lifts in Melbourne at the time, servicing the upper floors (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17-21).

The MLC weather beacon from an earlier MLC building – reportedly a 'long feature of Melbourne life' – was relocated to the top of the new building. Operated remotely by the Weather Bureau, the beacon provided weather updates and forecasts (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:19).

An image (appears to be a photo montage prior to completion) of the building was published in *The Age* in 1972 (31 Jul 1972:37), requesting occupants for 'The MLC Building', 'Melbourne's outstanding new office building' (Figure 5). 'The MLC Building' at 303-317 Collins Street was advertised in August 1973 as 'Melbourne's newest prestige office building' by leasing agents George G Henderson (*Age*,

13 Aug 1973:21). Photos published during this period showed the original entrance and forecourt area (Figure 4 – Figure 5).

In 2012, the building was referred to as Royal Bank Plaza (Goad 2012:199). MLC sold the property in 2017 (MLC). A low-scale addition has been constructed in front of the building, extending to the Collins and Elizabeth street boundaries (post-1984), and is occupied by Westpac in 2019. In 2019 the name of the building is the IOOF Centre (CoMMaps); the top of the weather beacon bears the name 'IOOF'.

### **Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, architects**

Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton was established in 1957, originating from the private practice of architect Robert Snowden Demaine in 1937. Demaine acted as caretaker for a number of Melbourne practices during World War II while their directors were involved in the war effort and gained considerable experience in hospital and industrial architectural design. Demaine was instrumental in advocating for the establishment of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA) Small Homes Service in 1947 and served as RVIA president in 1945 and RAlA national president in 1952-54.

Ailsa Merle Trundle joined the firm as junior partner in 1943, forming Demaine, Russell and Trundle alongside Arthur Leslie Russell, who specialised in hospital design. Trundle, born in Murwillumbah, NSW began her architectural studies through the Bendigo School of Mines, followed by study at the Gordon Institute at Geelong and the University of Melbourne's Architectural Atelier (MUAA). One of the first women to be offered a named partnership in an Australian architectural firm, she was responsible for much of the firm's welfare work, including buildings for the Autistic Children's Association (Black Rock, Mansfield and Bayswater), and the Dalkeith Home for the Aged, Traralgon.

In 1957, the firm amalgamated with the existing firm of Armstrong and Orton to become Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton. Lloyd Orton was educated at the Melbourne Technical College and the University of Melbourne and travelled to Europe on a scholarship after WWII. On his return to Melbourne in 1951 he co-founded the firm of Armstrong & Orton with young designer, Anthony Brown Armstrong.

Notable postwar buildings in central Melbourne designed by Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton include BP House on Albert Road, Melbourne (1962-4), the Naval and Military Club, Little Collins Street, Melbourne (1967) and the MLC Building, Collins Street, Melbourne (c1970-1973) in association with Civil and Civic Pty Ltd. The firm also designed three red-brick Brutalist buildings for the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT, buildings 51, 56 and 57) in the 1970s.

The firm continues to practise as Demaine Partnership.

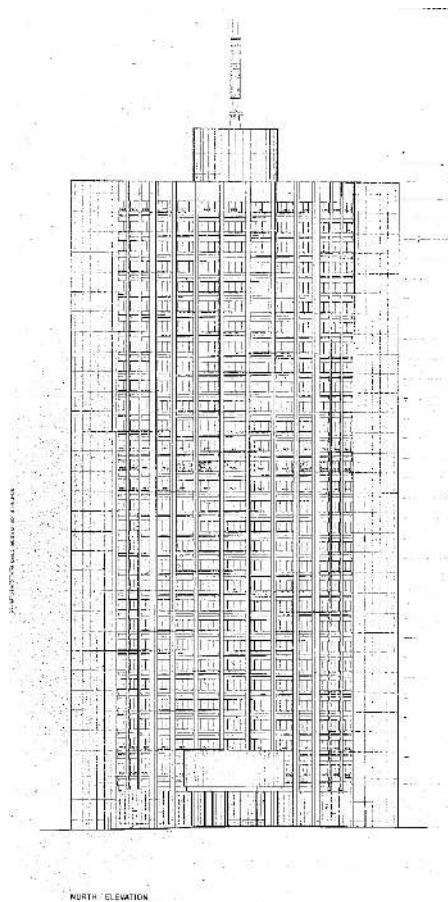


Figure 1. Architectural drawing of the north elevation, dated 1969 (BAP).

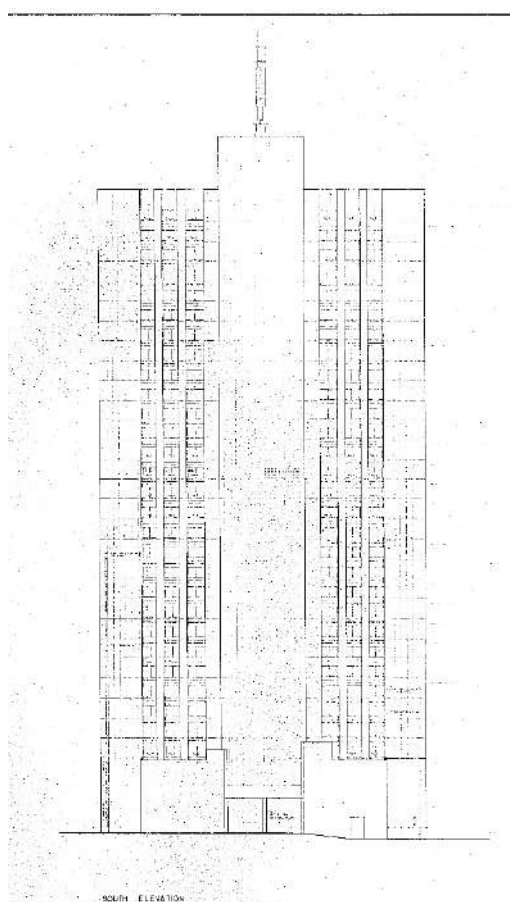


Figure 2. Architectural drawing of the south elevation, dated 1969 (BAP).

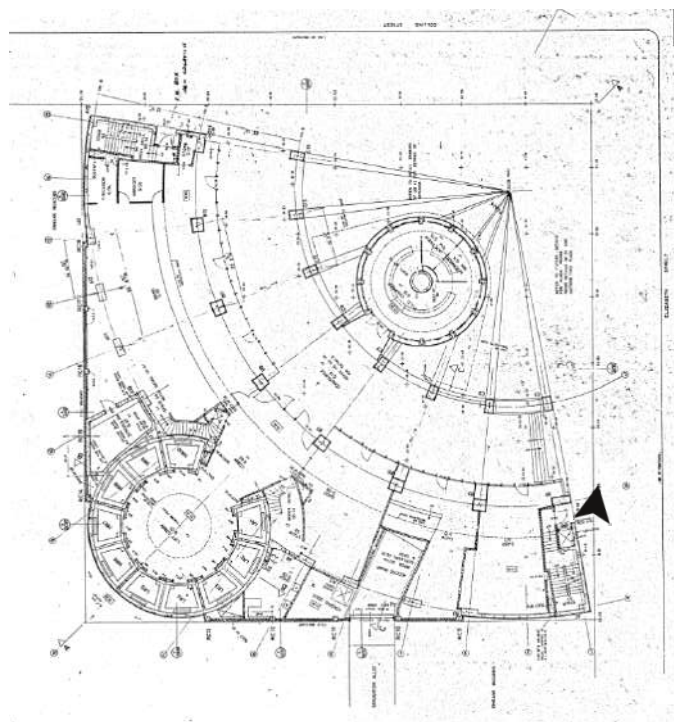


Figure 3. Ground floor plan, drawing dated 1969 (BAP).



Figure 4. Photo of the building published in the May/June edition of *Architecture in Australia* (AIA, May/Jun 1973:8).

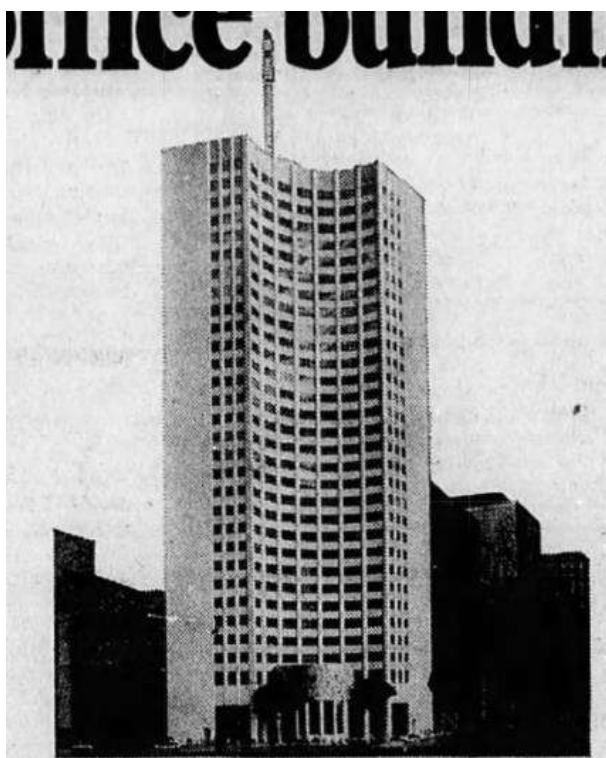


Figure 5. An image of the newly completed building published in *The Age* in July 1972 (*Age*, 31 Jul 1972:37).





Figure 6. An oblique aerial of the building in 1987, showing the weather beacon (Landata Victoria).

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former MLC Building at 303-317 Collins Street is a 30-storey commercial building located at the south-west corner of Collins and Elizabeth streets. Completed in 1973 to a design by Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is of unusual quadrant form, with the focal point near the main Collins and Elizabeth street intersection. A circular lift tower is located at the rear of the building and a low-rise forecourt, extending to both street fronts, has replaced an original forecourt rotunda. Adjacent buildings in both Collins and Elizabeth streets are low-rise and therefore the subject building is visible from a number of directions. Staughton Alley provides access to the south side of the building from Flinders Lane.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction, with the structure clearly expressed on the highly visible concave front facade. External precast concrete cladding, faced with thick granite panels with sandblasted finish, is an integral part of the structure as it served as external formwork.

The concave front façade of the building is articulated with vertical stone-clad piers which rise to the apex of the building. Alternating rows of aluminium framed fixed windows and stone-clad spandrels are set behind these piers with a crowning solid band above. Alternating bands of windows and spandrels are repeated across parts of the other three facades, with the exception of solid stone-clad panels which enclose internal access stairs at the rear corners of the building and the circular lift well at the centre of the rear convex façade.

At the corner of Collins and Elizabeth streets the building has been substantially altered at ground level with the removal of the original entrance rotunda and replacement with a low-scale building which extends across the curved front façade of the multi-storey building, obscuring the lower façade. Extending to the Collins and Elizabeth street boundaries, this is a partially glazed and panelled pavilion with a combination of column and pier supports and cantilever verandah with deep fascia.



## INTEGRITY

The Former MLC Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in c1970-73. Works to the building at the Collins and Elizabeth street corner, including demolition of the forecourt rotunda and construction of a low-scale forecourt building which extends to both street boundaries, has altered the original design at street level.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former MLC Building at 303-317 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey office building design. Located on a prominent site, the building's grid-like walls of clearly expressed structure, clad with precast granite-faced concrete panels, can be clearly observed from many directions. The curved form of the building is highly unusual and distinctive. Despite demolition of the original forecourt rotunda, and construction of a low-rise forecourt which extends to both Collins and Elizabeth street frontages, the upper curved facades of the Former MLC Building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former MLC Building. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

*Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)





Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)





Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)





Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

### Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, the Former MLC Building clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to a number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings listed above, the subject building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A



## REFERENCES

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## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 1993</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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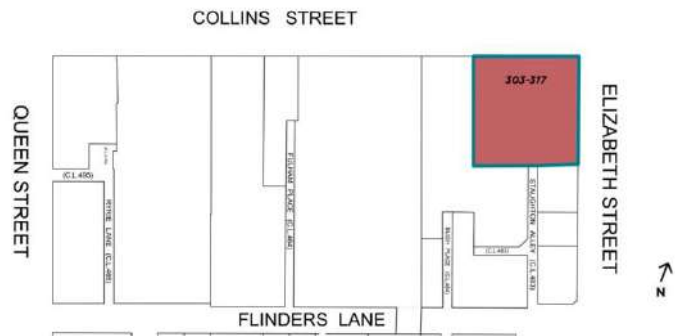
<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former MLC Building

**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1970-73.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later additions made to the forecourt are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Former MLC Building at 303-317 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed c1970-73 to a design by Civil and Civic Pty Ltd in association with Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, the Former MLC Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former MLC Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular from the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 30-storey structure, the Former MLC Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar commercial building including

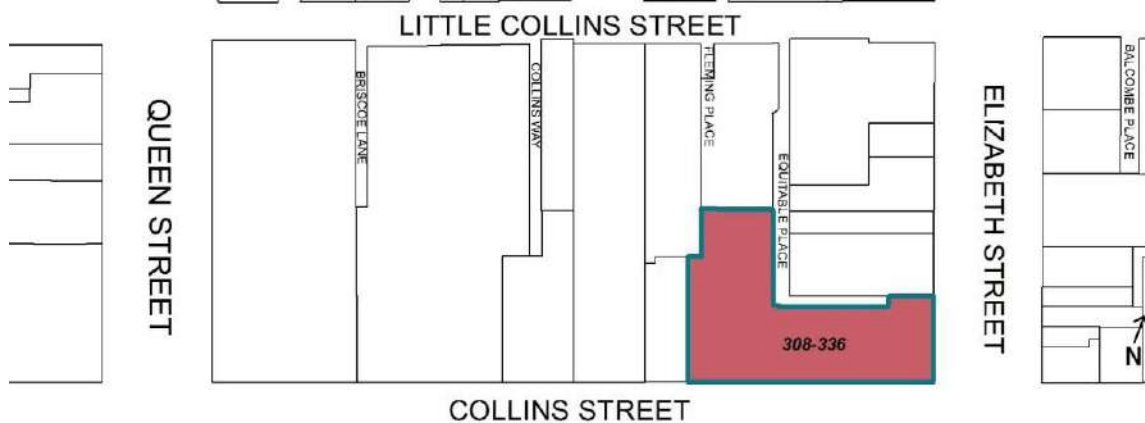
grid-like walls of clearly expressed structure, and the use of materials such as granite-faced precast concrete panel cladding. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style. The adoption of a curved form to clearly display the trabeated system of construction is unusual and distinctive (Criterion D).

**Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)

<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza with 'Children's Tree' Sculpture
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102137



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2018

**SURVEY BY:** Context

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** Not provided

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** C

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Stephenson & Turner (building)  
Tom Bass (sculpture)

**BUILDER:** Not known

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1963



## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Offices
1920s	Offices
1960s	Offices

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

## SUMMARY

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building at 308-336 Collins Street, opened in 1963. It was designed by architects Stephenson & Turner and constructed by Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd. The building was set back to create a 'pedestrian precinct' and a commissioned sculpture by artist Tom Bass, 'Children's Tree' was installed in the forecourt of the building facing Elizabeth Street as part of the design.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17).

Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

Prior to the present building, the subject site on the key city corner of Elizabeth and Collins streets was occupied by the Equitable Building, built between 1891 and 1896 (MV 2018a) (see Figure 1). The Equitable Life Assurance Society (USA) paid £360,000 for the site in 1890, towards the end of the economic boom of the 1880s (MV 2018a). The Equitable Life Assurance Society had wanted to build 'the grandest building in the Southern Hemisphere', and commissioned the large structure to a design by American architect, Edward Raht. The building was constructed by David Mitchell (MV 2018a) and the Equitable Life Assurance Society owned the building until 1923, when it sold it to the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society (MV 2018a).

The Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society was founded in Melbourne in 1873, and by 1874 had established offices in other Australian cities. Offices in British colonial outposts, such as New Zealand and South Africa, followed (MV 2018b). By the late 1950s, new headquarters were required by the Society. Consequently, the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society demolished the Equitable Building at the corner of Elizabeth and Swanston streets and constructed the current office block (MV 2018b). Parts of the old Equitable Building can be found in various locations around Melbourne, with Harcourt granite blocks situated outside the Melbourne Museum, and the statuary above the portico moved to the grounds of the University of Melbourne (MV 2018a).

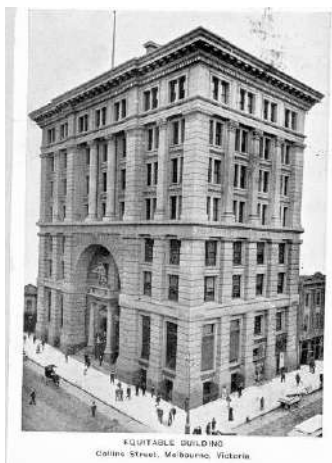


Figure 1. The Equitable Building, which stood on the subject site (Source: General sequence postcard 1906, SLV)

Construction started on the existing building on the subject site in 1959, with the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance building opening in 1963 (MBAI 33728; Sievers 1963, SLV). Gold lettering on both the Elizabeth and Collins street facades of the building promoted the company's name. Stephenson & Turner were the architects for the building, which was constructed by Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd (*Cross-Section* 1963:np).

The *Cross-Section* architecture journal described the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance building in December 1963:

*[The building] is conservatively clad, in panels of cream travertine Italian marble, grey Harcourt (Vic.) granite and black Imperial (S.A.) granite. The C.M.L. building sits back 20 ft from the Elizabeth Street frontage, providing the currently conventional street-side pedestrian precinct...The pavement space outside the C.M.L. is yet to be enlivened by a Tom Bass sculpture...On the skyline, the C.M.L. building fits into place without looking like a raw and independent intrusion...C.M.L. cost approx. £3 million. Construction: rigid steel frame. 21 floors above ground, 3 basements. Air conditioned (Cross-Section 1963:np).*

The building was set back, which allowed for a 'pedestrian precinct' and the installation of a Tom Bass sculpture in the forecourt of the building facing Elizabeth Street (National Trust 2014) (see Figure 2 and Figure 3). The Bass sculpture in the forecourt, installed by 18 December 1963, is known as 'Children's Tree' and was commissioned by the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society as part of the site design (*Canberra Times* 18 December 1963:35). Tom Bass later evaluated the work as follows.

Another really important part of my work has been children's sculpture...The next thing that came along was the Children's Tree in Melbourne. I had been asked by an insurance company to do a sculpture for a space that had been created in the forecourt of their new building, right in the heart of the city...When they first said they wanted a children's sculpture there, I thought how inappropriate it was to have something for children in such a busy, noisy place. But...the more I worked on it the more realised how important it was to create this little incident in the heart of a great bustling city that would remind people of their childhood. It would also be where children brought into the city could find



some little thing that related to them. So, again, I was really drawn into it and had a thoroughly marvellous experience doing it (Bass and Smart 2006:108-109).

The building was refurbished in 2003, and this is presumably when substantial alterations to the façade were made (CoMMaps).



Figure 2. The subject building not long after completion. (Source: Sievers 1963, SLV copyright)



Figure 3. A view of the statue and building behind it. (Source: Sievers 1963, SLV copyright)

#### *Tom Bass, sculptor*

Tom Bass was a prolific Australian sculptor, who completed many public and private commissions, including the 'Trial of Socrates' at Wilson Hall at the University of Melbourne and another children's sculpture 'Genii' in Queen Victoria Gardens. Bass' community-focused work is featured in many prominent Australian public spaces and institutions, including schools, universities and churches, as well as government and corporate sites. In 1974, Bass established the Tom Bass Sculpture Studio School (still in operation), where he taught until his death in 2010. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to public art. A retrospective of Bass' work was held at the Sydney Opera House, where it was claimed that 'no artist has done more to shape the face of public art in Australia' (Brown 2010; Design and Art Australia 2011).

#### *Stephenson & Turner, architects*

The *Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture* contains the following information about Stephenson & Turner:

*At its peak, Stephenson & Turner was Australia's largest architecture firm, with offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle, New Zealand and Hong Kong. It was formed in 1921 by A. G. Stephenson and Percy Meldrum as Stephenson & Meldrum, after both had returned to Australia after WWI, having met at London's Architectural Association. The firm had relatively modest beginnings, with a range of projects and clients, including the State*

*Savings Bank of Victoria (Its chairman, Sir William McBeath, had encouraged Stephenson to return to Melbourne to set up a practice.) The firm's first hospital client, the Melbourne Children's Hospital in 1925, and a proposed reform to the hospital system, prompted Stephenson to imagine a new direction for his fledgling firm and he audaciously borrowed money to take an extensive overseas trip in 1926-27 to the United States and Canada to gather intelligence and experience with a view to becoming a firm specialising in hospitals...*

*The firm established a Sydney office in 1934 led by Donald Keith Turner, and were known in NSW from 1935 as Stephenson, Meldrum & Turner, taking on several large hospital projects including Gloucester House at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney (1936) ... Meldrum was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with Stephenson's interest in taking on more hospital work... The result was a very rapid and acrimonious split in the partnership...*

*Turner & Stephenson continued as Stephenson & Turner, continuing their hospital work during WWII, and afterwards promoted a number of their associates, such as Ellison Harvie, Geoffrey Moline and John D. Fisher, to partners. Beyond their hospital work, the firm also undertook key industrial complexes, commercial office buildings, banks, town plans (including Shepparton (1946) and the Australian pavilions at the Paris Exposition (1937) and the New York World's Fair (1939-40) (Willis 2012).*

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne is a 19-storey concrete and steel building built 1959-63 in the Post-War Modernist style. It exhibits key characteristics of the style, particularly the use of a steel and reinforced-concrete frame allowing for its great height at the time, distinct double height base in a contrasting material and set back shopfronts to create an undercroft. Positioned on the north-west corner of Collins Street and Elizabeth Street, the building is set back from Elizabeth Street to create a small publicly accessible plaza. The building has a narrow frontage to Elizabeth Street, but is on a deep block that extends a considerable distance along Collins Street.

Above the ground level the primary façade facing Collins Street is divided into sixteen equal vertical bays providing a regular grid of windows. Four more identical vertical bays complete the eastern elevation facing Elizabeth Street reinforcing the cubiform massing of the building. The windows are framed in natural aluminium with a central mullion. It is unclear if these are original or have been replaced, but the original pattern of two vertically proportioned sashes for each module is retained.

The building was refurbished in 2003 which included the re-cladding of the facade in an aluminium cladding system, replacing the original panels of cream travertine Italian marble and grey Harcourt granite. This has resulted in the building losing some of the original design refinement of the structural grid, especially the prominence of the projecting vertical elements. Notwithstanding this the original character of the building resulting from its cubiform massing, structural grid and regular pattern of windows remains clearly legible.

At the ground and first floor level the original form of the building remains largely unaltered. A simple rectangular pattern etched into the granite is evident in the spandrel above the shop fronts along both Collins and Elizabeth streets, which is original. The windows at the first-floor level are natural aluminium framed and appear original. At the ground level the shop fronts were originally set back from the street to provide an undercroft as the building had no awning at street level. The shop fronts have been replaced and brought forward to be in line with the building's façade above. A continuous

awning has been added to the Collins Street façade. Along Elizabeth Street a smaller cantilevered awning has been added and provides some shelter to the plaza space.

The Tom Bass sculpture known as 'Children's Tree' was commissioned by the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society in 1963 specifically for the plaza of the building at 308-336 Collins Street. It remains in its original setting, located close to the two pedestrian crossings at the intersection of Collins and Elizabeth streets. The bronze sculpture displays two children around a small, leafy tree: a girl holds a doll and a boy kneels to have a closer look at a lizard at the base of the tree. On top of the tree is an owl overlooking passersby.

## INTEGRITY

308-336 Collins Street is generally intact with some changes visible to original or early fabric. Alterations include the recladding of the building above street level with an aluminium cladding system and the replacement of shopfronts, bringing them forward to be in line with the building above. At the ground and first floor level the original form of the building remains with its original granite cladding and what appear to be original aluminium framed windows. The plaza has been retained, although its extension into the building's undercroft has been lost. The Tom Bass sculpture 'Children's Tree' remains in its original location within the forecourt.

The building's original built form, scale, some evidence of its original materials and key stylistic details remain clearly legible.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey building design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently

included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

*Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).



One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)





Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)





Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street  
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William  
Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street  
(Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation  
Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart &  
McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan  
Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen  
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street (Yunken Freeman, 1966)

## Public artworks

Within the Hoddle Grid, the following public artworks are comparable to the Tom Bass 1963 'Children's Tree' sculpture, in terms of the medium, setting or time period:

*Hosie's Hotel Mural, 1-5 Elizabeth Street, 1955 (VHR H2094; HO938 – mural only)*

Hosie's Hotel Mural, at the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders streets, was created in 1955. Richard Beck (1912-1985), an English and German trained graphic designer and one of the leading modernist graphic designers in Melbourne at the time, was commissioned to create a mural for the new Hosie's Hotel. The Hosie's Hotel Mural is of historic importance for its connection to the modernist movement in architecture and design in Melbourne. At this time, modernism was important as the city of Melbourne attempted to present itself to the world as a modern, contemporary city at the time of the 1956 Olympic Games. The re-building of Hosie's Hotel was an expression of a desire to provide modern hotel accommodation and the inclusion of the mural in the overall design of the building demonstrates the desire to appear modern.





Hosies Hotel Mural, built in 1955.

*Former Sleigh Corner Building with 'Transformation', 158-164 Queen Street, 1964 (Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

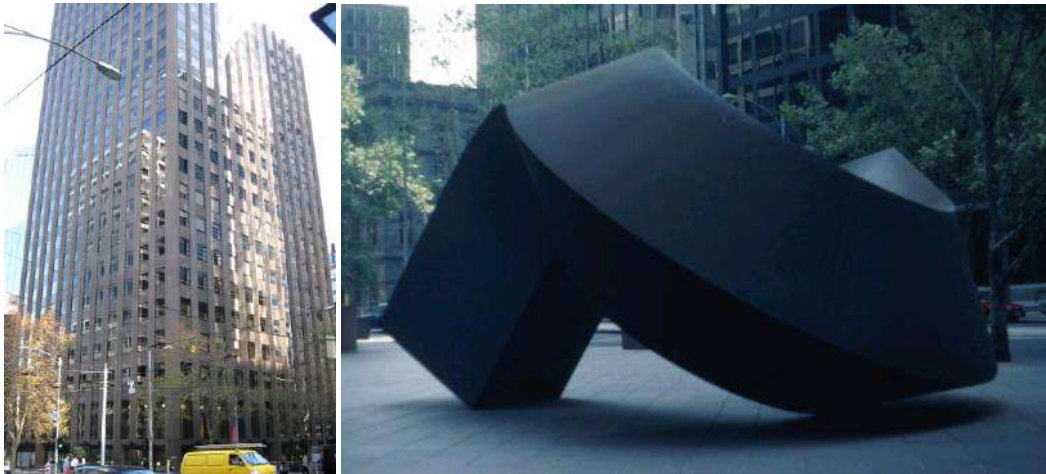
The former Sleigh Corner Building (now known as Elders House), at 158-164 Queen Street, is a 15-storey postwar pre-cast concrete and steel curtain wall corner commercial office building. It was constructed in 1964 to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon for H C Sleigh Ltd. It is a fine example of the postwar International style. It has a narrow frontage to Queen Street and deeper frontage to Bourke Street. The building retains its original plaza with sculpture 'Transformation' created by sculptor Tom Bass.



158-164 Queen Street and 'Transformation', built in 1964. (Source: Context 2019)

*St James, 527-555 Bourke Street with 'Awakening', 1969*

A site with two building properties. Designed in the International style by the New York company Skidmore Owings & Merrill LLP in partnership with Bates Smart & McCutcheon and built in 1969. The sculpture 'Awakening' by the internationally renowned sculptor, Clement Meadmore, partially encloses the space to the east, complementing the architecture and providing a human scale.



Tower at 535 Bourke Street and 'Awakening' by Clement Meadmore, built in 1969.

*Former Shell House, 1 Spring Street, 1985-89 (VHR H2356; HO1235)*

1 Spring Street, Melbourne comprises a 28-storey office tower and northern podium, main foyer with Arthur Boyd mural 'Bathers and Pulpit Rock', and external plazas including a large external plaza at the Spring Street corner containing the Charles O Perry sculpture 'Shell Mace'. The building was originally known as Shell House (VHD Place ID 197961; CoMMaps).



1 Spring Street and 'Shell Mace' by Charles O Perry, built in 1985-89.

### Analysis

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza compares with the above examples of Post-War Modernist style office buildings built from the 1960s to the mid 1970s. The subject building is a generally intact example of the type, demonstrating the key characteristics such as the use of steel and reinforced concrete frame and non-loadbearing glazed façade system. Eagle House at 473 Bourke Street (VHR H1806), Reserve Bank of Australia at 60 Collins Street (Contributory in HO504 Collins East Precinct) generally compare with the subject building, sharing similar design aspects of the postwar period.

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza is an important, and increasingly rare, example within the Hoddle Grid of a postwar office site on a major corner location, where the original

configuration of the publicly accessible open plaza has been retained. Most other examples in Melbourne that retain their original plaza setting are located outside of the Hoddle Grid, such as the Victorian State Offices at 1 Macarthur Street and 1 Treasury Place (VHR H1526), which also has a forecourt plaza with the building set back from the street. The subject site is distinguished by its siting on a prestigious corner location with an intact open plaza.

The site is also notable among its contemporaries for the sculpture 'Children's Tree', created by important sculptor Tom Bass, in the plaza. As an artwork exposed to general public within the busy central Melbourne area, it is comparable to the Hosie's Hotel Mural, in that both were created during the postwar era. As a three-dimensional sculpture included in the design for an overall building scheme, St James with 'Awakening' at 527-555 Bourke Street and the former Sleigh Corner Building with 'Transformation' at 158-164 Queen Street (both recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) are comparable to the subject site.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
✓	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

### MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

### OTHER

N/A



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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	C
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 1993</b>	C
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<b>Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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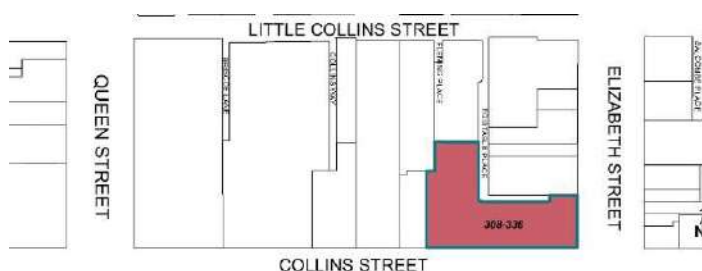
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society Building with Plaza and 'Children's Tree' sculpture



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building, built in 1959-63 to a design by Stephenson & Turner, and publicly accessible plaza with bronze 'Children's Tree' sculpture, created in 1963 by Tom Bass at 308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne, is significant.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- Original building form and scale;
- Original publicly accessible plaza setting with bronze 'Children's Tree' sculpture, created in 1963 by Tom Bass;
- Original pattern of fenestrations; and
- Original double height building base with granite cladding and aluminium windows.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society Building with Plaza and 'Children's Tree' sculpture at 308-336 Collins Street is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

**Why it is significant?**

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The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building, constructed in 1959-63 to a design by Stephenson & Turner, for the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society (founded in Melbourne in 1873), is significant as part of the post-World War Two development and the rapid growth of the corporate architecture of the 1950s-1970s. Its development reflected the expansion of large national and international companies opting for construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance building is significant historically as a reflection of the growth of insurance and assurance companies in Victoria during the 1950s-60s resulting in many company-named buildings being commissioned and constructed. (Criterion A)

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building and plaza is also historically significant as an example of a postwar office site that provided a publicly accessible plaza, demonstrating one of the key aspects of the postwar corporate buildings in Melbourne. Many postwar office towers also played a gallery role as sculpture, paintings and tapestries were installed in their foyers, meeting rooms and forecourts. The provision of the forecourt or plaza in the curtilages of building allotments created a specific urban form in the central city. The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building and plaza is an important example that still retains the ground level plaza and commissioned artwork by sculptor Tom Bass, 'Children's Tree'. (Criteria A and D)

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building is a good example of post war development in central Melbourne that retains its original form, scale and characteristic stylistic details which reflect the era and original design in which it was constructed. It exhibits a design aesthetic characteristic of its type, medium/high rise commercial office buildings that combine expansive glazed panel with solid sections to achieve a distinctive expressed aesthetic. Key stylistic details include the regular grid pattern of windows above ground level and the original double height building base, clad in granite and retaining the original aluminium framed windows. It is unusual in retaining its original plaza and bronze sculpture 'Children's Tree' created in 1963 by Tom Bass specifically for this space. (Criterion D)

The bronze sculpture 'Children's Tree', created in 1963 by celebrated Australian sculptor Tom Bass, and set within its original plaza setting is aesthetically significant. The aesthetic qualities of the place are enhanced by the incorporation of an outstanding piece of publicly accessible artwork in the plaza, which was commissioned by the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society. The sculpture and plaza were integral parts of the original design of the building at 308-336 Collins Street, by architects Stephenson & Turner. (Criterion E)

**Primary source**

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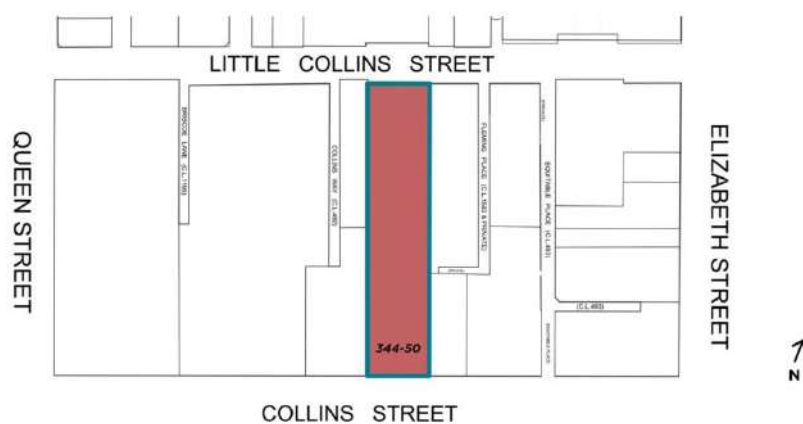
Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)



**SITE NAME** Former AMP Building [also known as Citibank Centre (current name)]

**STREET ADDRESS** 344-350 Collins Street, Melbourne

**PROPERTY ID** 102135



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** No

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** Ungraded

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb

**BUILDER:** E A Watts Pty Ltd

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1966-1968

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail
1920s	Retail, Workshop, Caretaker
1960s	Office, Retail

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The multi-storey office building, extending from Collins Street to Little Collins Street, was designed by architects and engineers Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, as a rental investment for the owners, the AMP Society. The structural engineering consultants were Clive Steele Associates and builder was E A Watts Pty Ltd. The building was constructed in 1966-1968.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

The multi-storey office building, extending from Collins Street to Little Collins Street, was designed by architects and engineers Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, as a rental investment for the owners, the AMP Society (BAP). The structural engineering consultants were Clive Steele Associates and builder was E A Watts Pty Ltd (BAP; *Cross-Section*, Apr 1970).

Architectural drawings dating to December 1965 and January 1966 show key floor plans and elevations (Figure 1 - Figure 3). The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the building in July 1966 (with an estimated total value of \$5,117,800) (BAI) and construction was completed in 1968 (Figure 4). The Taxation Department occupied the building from March 1969 (*Age*, 28 Feb 1969:2; S&Mc).

The project was discussed in contemporary architectural publications. The September/October 1969 edition of *Architect* (Sep-Oct 1969:24) reported that the new design features on both the Collins and Little Collins street facades of the AMP Building included:

*... flush glazing, concealed fixing and self-draining sub-sills. Window frames and mullions both incorporate a recessed channel for terminating internal partitions. All are in Kalcolor aluminium, by Comalco. Its main façade ... has 120 double windows recessed in pre-cast concrete surrounds. A wide transom acts as a strengthening member. Light court windows*



*are fully reversible for cleaning. Fabrication and design of windows and door suites was by Perry Metal Window Company.*

In April 1970, *Cross-Section* discussed the completed building, noting that the Collins Street façade 'has a grid of precast concrete surrounds, a proportioned pattern more generously spaced and slimmer in mass than is usual in this kind of office building finish in Melbourne, perhaps more suited to the scale of a wide street' (*Cross-Section*, No. 209, Apr 1970:3).

In 2019 the building is called the Citibank Centre (ComMaps).

### **Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, architects**

Godfrey and Spowers was established in c1901 by architects, William Scott Purves Godfrey and Henry Howard Spowers. The firm designed a large number of houses, warehouses and institutional buildings and was best known for its bank building designs.

Godfrey's son, William Purves Race Godfrey, joined the practice in 1931 as a student. Spowers died the following year and Race Godfrey was made partner in c1934. The firm was suspended in 1941 as a direct result of World War II, during which time Race Godfrey worked with the RAAF as a civilian architect in Melbourne and Sydney and his father, William Godfrey, carried out commissions for air-raid shelters. Race Godfrey recommenced practice late in 1944. His father did not continue with the new firm, and retired from practice in the same year.

By the early 1950s, Race Godfrey expanded the firm to include new partners, Eric Hughes, Geoffrey Mewton and John Lobb, becoming Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb. The expanded firm specialised in large office and institutional buildings. Notable commissions within central Melbourne included the Allans Building at 278 Collins Street (1959), the Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-69 Collins Street (1959-60), the AMP Building, 344-50 Collins Street (1966-68) and the State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-43 Queen Street (1967-68). The National Mutual Building, Collins Street, Melbourne (1962-65, demolished 2015) was another key work for the firm during this period.

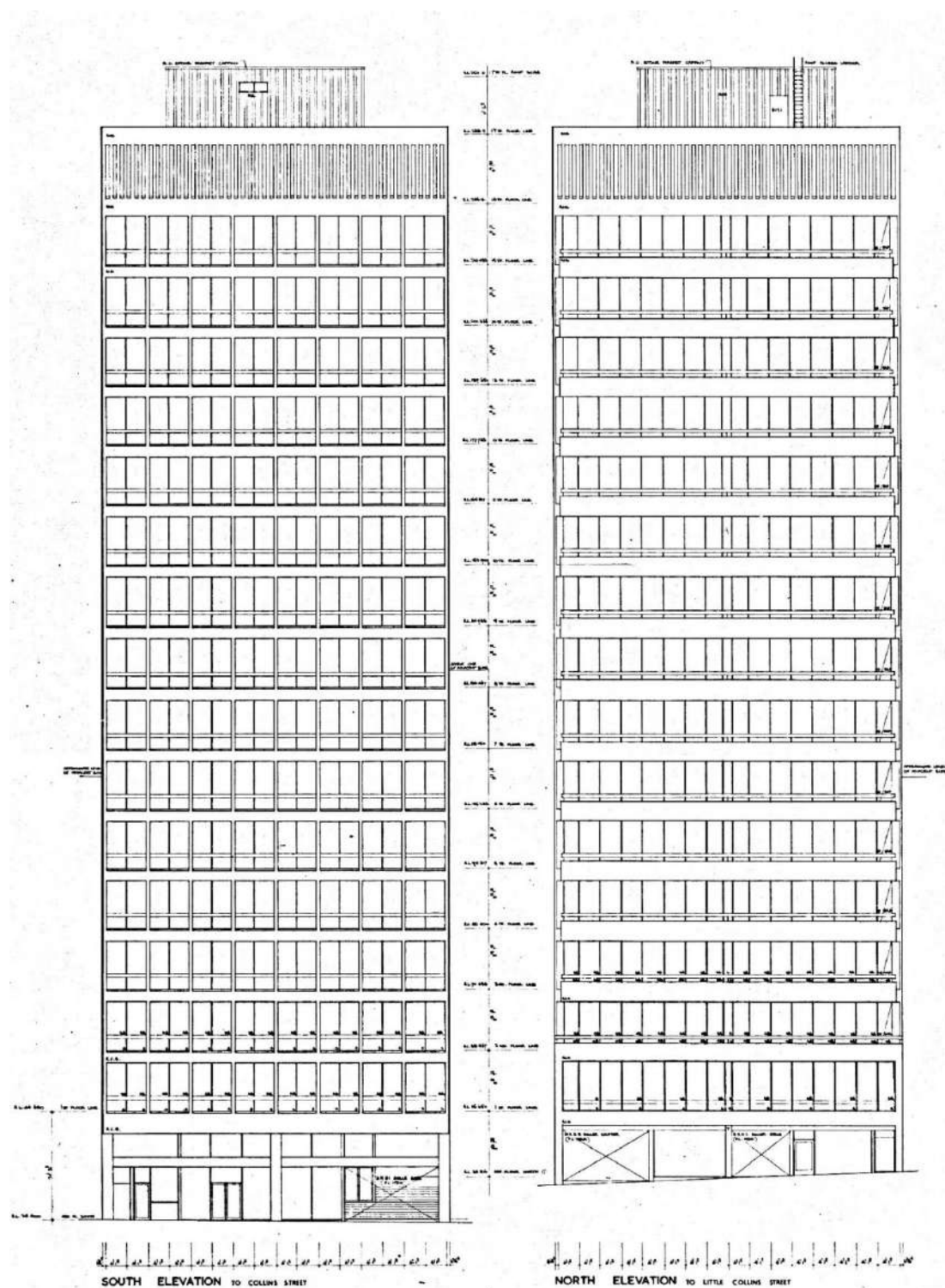


Figure 1. South (left) and north (right) elevations. Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated January 1966 (BAP).

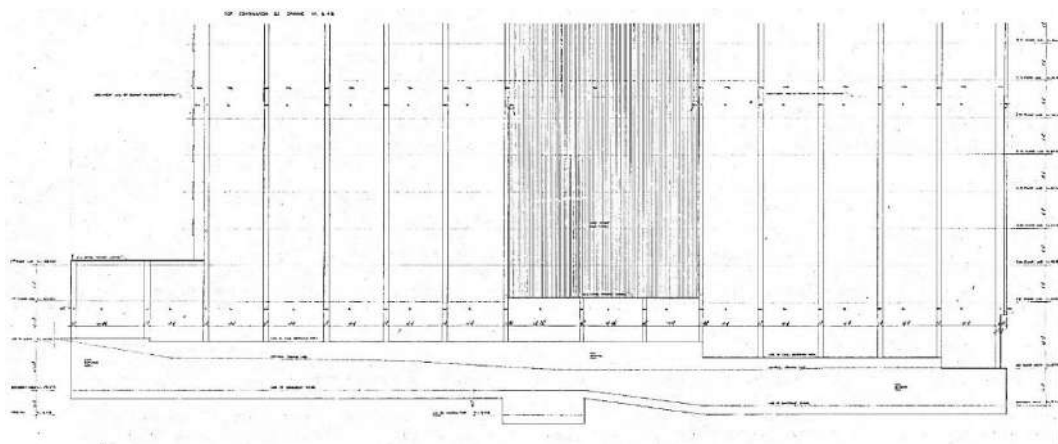


Figure 2. Lower part of the west elevation. Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated January 1966 (BAP).

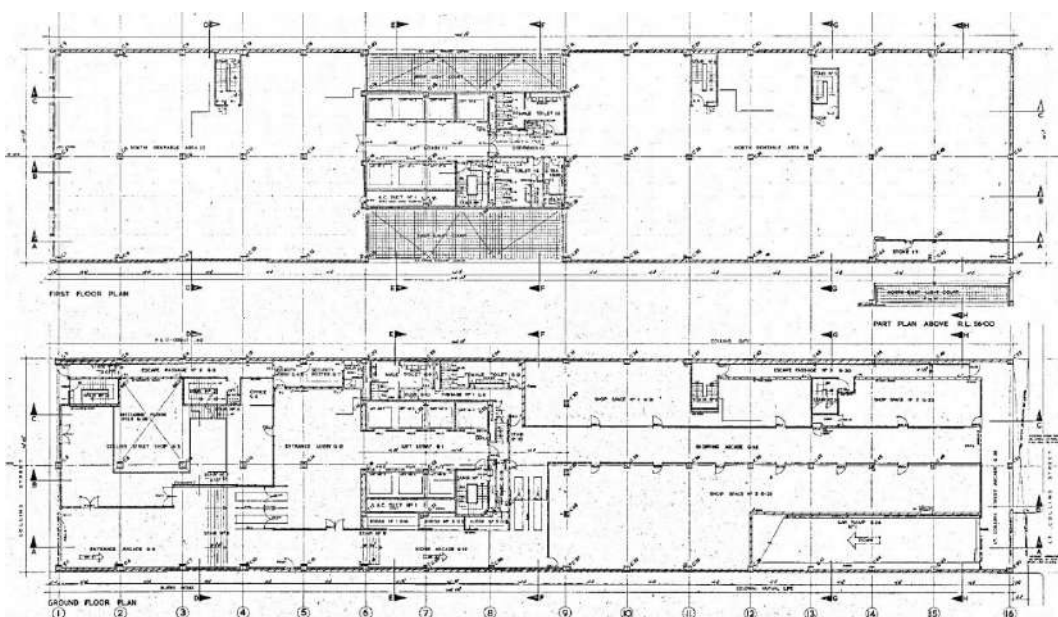


Figure 3. Ground floor plan (bottom) and first floor plan (top). Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated December 1965 (BAP).



Figure 4. The newly completed building in 1968 (NLA, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, object 161643077).



Figure 5. Photo of the building published in the Sep/Oct 1969 edition of *Architect* (Sep-Oct 1969:25).





Figure 6. Photo of the Collins Street façade, published in 1970 (*Cross-Section*, No. 209, Apr 1970:3).



Figure 7. Part of the Collins Street entrance in 1975 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/88).



## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former AMP Building at 344-350 Collins Street is a 16-storey commercial building located on the north side of Collins Street between Queen Street and Elizabeth Street. Constructed in 1966-68 to a design by architects Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Rectangular in plan, the building has frontages to both Collins Street and Little Collins Street. The central core of the building, containing the lift lobby, is set back from adjoining buildings above the ground floor level, creating tall light wells to both the east and west sides of the building. A public car park in the basement is accessed from Little Collins Street, below a double-height podium which fronts the street.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with brick side walls, and three internal rows of columns along the length of the building. The front façade is a grid-like curtain wall formed from generously spaced, slim precast concrete spandrels and mullions, which surround aluminium-framed glazing units with broad lower transom and fine central mullion. The rear façade faces north and incorporates rows of projecting precast concrete balconies with fine handrails, which provide some shade to the curtain wall of continuous glazing and creates a dominant horizontal emphasis. Facings to the precast concrete panels are of reconstructed stone and the same material is used to form a slotted service screen at the top floor of the building that sits flush with both the front and rear facades.

The lower Collins Street façade has been greatly modified and the original form and detailing is no longer identifiable. This includes both the ground level shopfronts and the first-floor set of windows.

## INTEGRITY

The Former AMP Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1966-68. Works to the building at street level have altered the original design.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street and first-floor level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former AMP Building at 344-350 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey commercial building design. This includes the contrasting fully glazed grid-like curtain walls of the front and rear facades and their associated detailing, including fine precast concrete spandrels and mullions to Collins Street and projecting precast concrete balconies which shade the continuous glazing of the rear façade. Despite modifications made to the lower two levels of the Collins Street façade, the upper facades of the Former AMP Building remain highly intact to their original design and can be clearly observed from Collins Street and Little Collins Street.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former AMP Building. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:





Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)





Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)





Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

**Analysis**

As a fine, highly intact and highly representative example of Post-War Modernist commercial building, the Former AMP Building at 344-350 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1960s to mid-1970s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a number of other examples identified above – the Former AMP Building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).



**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

*Architect*: September/October 1969.

Building Application Index (BAI), City of Melbourne.

Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne

City of Melbourne Maps (CoMMaps), Site Details.

*Cross-Section*: No. 209, April 1970.

Goad, Phillip, Ed. (2003), *Judging Architecture*, Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Victoria).

Murphy, Guy & Bryce Raworth (2012), 'Godfrey & Spowers' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

National Library of Australia (NLA), images and photographers as cited.

Sands & McDougall Directories (S&Mc).

State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, images and photographers as cited.

*The Age*.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 1993</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Review of Heritage Overlay Listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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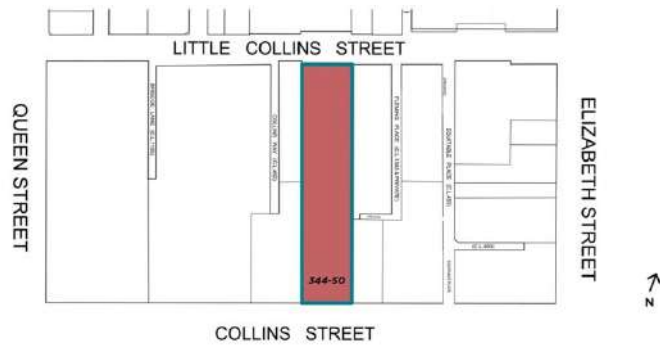
<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former AMP Building

**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1966-68.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street and first-floor level facades are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Former AMP Building at 344-350 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1966-68 to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, the Former AMP Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former AMP Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid-1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 16-storey building, the Former AMP Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a postwar structure, including two contrasting curtain walls – the front facade with fine spandrels and mullions and the rear façade with projecting balconies and

glazed wall behind – and the use of materials such as stone-faced precast concrete panels and aluminium-framed windows. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

**Primary source**

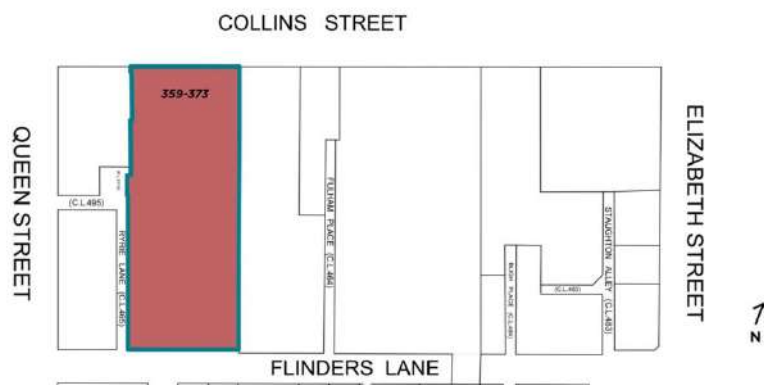
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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)





<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building [also known as Optus Centre (current name)]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102092



SURVEY DATE: October 2019

SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	No
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Ungraded
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Bates Smart & McCutcheon	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Not known
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	c1972-1975

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office, Hotel, Studio, Caretaker, Smoking Room
1920s	Café/Restaurant, Office, Studio, Merchant, Bank
1960s	Retail, Office, Studio, Retail, Bank

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The building at 359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon for the Victorian headquarters of the Commonwealth Banking Corporation. Construction of the multi-storey tower was completed in 1975.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.



Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation building on the south side of Collins Street, between Queen and Elizabeth streets, was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon (Figure 1). The major designer on the project was Robert Bruce (Goad 2004:205). The City of Melbourne received a building permit application in August 1971, with the total cost of the project estimated at \$17,442,000 (BAI). An article published in January 1972 reported that the 33-storey building, 'claimed as Melbourne's "largest" bank', would serve as the Victorian headquarters of the Commonwealth Banking Corporation (*Age*, 12 Jan 1972:21). Construction of the multi-storey tower was completed in 1975 and at the time of completion was the tallest building in Melbourne (NTAV 2014:53; Goad 2004:205, 208).

The Commonwealth Banking Corporation had occupied an earlier building on the site, built c1922. Following demolition of this earlier building, Bates Smart & McCutcheon also designed a temporary structure to accommodate the bank on site during the construction phase. This was completed by January 1972 (*Age*, 12 Jan 1972:21; S&Mc).

Architectural drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated 1972, show the elevations and original form of the Collins Street entrance of the tower building (Figure 2 - Figure 4). Goad described the building's design (drawing similarities to Bates Smart & McCutcheon's design of 251-257 Collins Street), as being set back from Collins Street, with a 'strong horizontal emphasis that indicated

graphic trabeated construction' and glazing set back deeply from the face of the building, which were 'clear expressions of structure' (Goad 2004:205). At ground level, Goad noted that the tower broke the line of the 'street wall' in favour of the current Melbourne City Council building regulations for mini-plazas. The multi-level banking chamber 'took advantage of pedestrian movement between Flinders Lane and Collins Street', essentially continuing Melbourne's network of lanes and arcades within the building itself (Goad 2004:205). The building was clad with 'reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall units' (*Architect*, Nov/Dec 1974:8).

A recent low-scale addition has been constructed off the Collins Street façade, designed by architects Woods Bagot (Schiavello). In 2019 the building serves as the Optus Centre (CoMMaps).

### **Bates Smart & McCutcheon, architects**

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon was formed when Osborn McCutcheon joined the existing firm of Bates & Smart in 1926. Bates & Smart had itself been born out of previous iterations of a firm that could be traced back to Reed & Barnes, making it one of the oldest practices in the country (Goad 2012:72). By the 1960s the firm had become one of Australia's largest architectural firms. It exists today as Bates Smart (Goad 2012:72).

During the 1930s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had earned a reputation for designing Georgian-style residences, but also went on to win RVIA awards for their work on the AMP Building in Collins Street (1926-31), Buckley & Nunn Building in Bourke Street (now David Jones, 1933), and the Second Church of Christ Scientist in Camberwell (1936-37).

By the 1950s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had become Australia's 'expert' in high-rise office buildings design (Goad 2012:73). Much of their work at this time was large structures with glass curtain walls. In Melbourne this was exemplified by ICI House, which broke the city's existing 132-foot (40m) height limit in 1955-8 (Goad 2012:73). Other work completed by the firm in the 1950s included the first of the Sleigh Buildings at 158-172 Queen Street, Melbourne (1953-55 & 1964), Union House at 43-51 Queen Street, Melbourne (1957) and the AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne (1956-58).

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon continued to expand into the 1960s and 70s, with its design approach shifting from glazed curtain walls to facades of artificial stone or prefabricated concrete panels. Works in Melbourne during this period included AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, Bourke Street (1965-69) in association with US firm, Skidmore Owings and Merrill; the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61); the South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street (1961-62) and the Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67) with F C Armstrong.

In the 1970s the firm designed the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne (c1972-75); the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73) and the double tower and plaza complex of Collins Place, Collins Street (1970-80), undertaken in collaboration with international architecture practice, I M Pei. Other notable works by the firm include the large collaborative designs of Melbourne Central with Kisho Kurokawa (1983-92) and Federation Square with Lab Architecture Studio (1997-2002) (Goad 2012:74).



Figure 1. Illustration of the proposed multi-storey building by Bates Smart& McCutcheon (c1970) (Goad 2004; *Architect*, Sep/Oct 1970:12).



Figure 2. North elevation to Collins Street (left) and south elevation to Flinders Lane (right). Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated January 1972 (BAP).



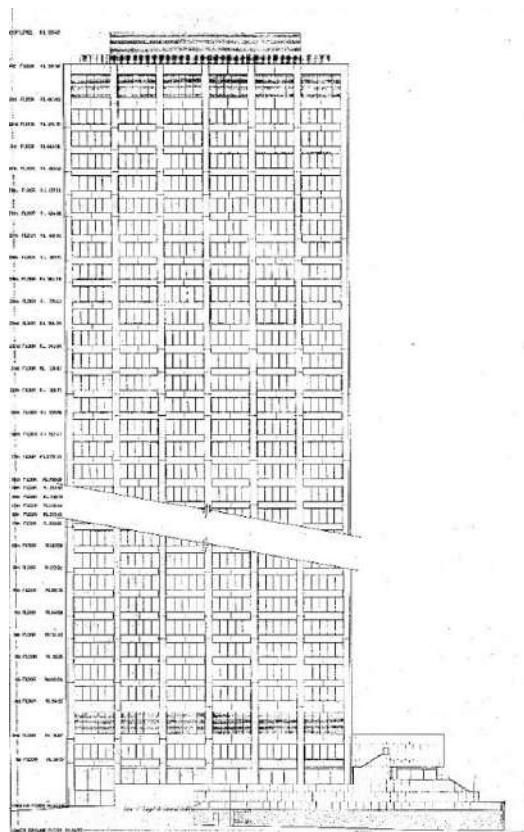


Figure 3. West elevation. Drawing by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated January 1972 (BAP).

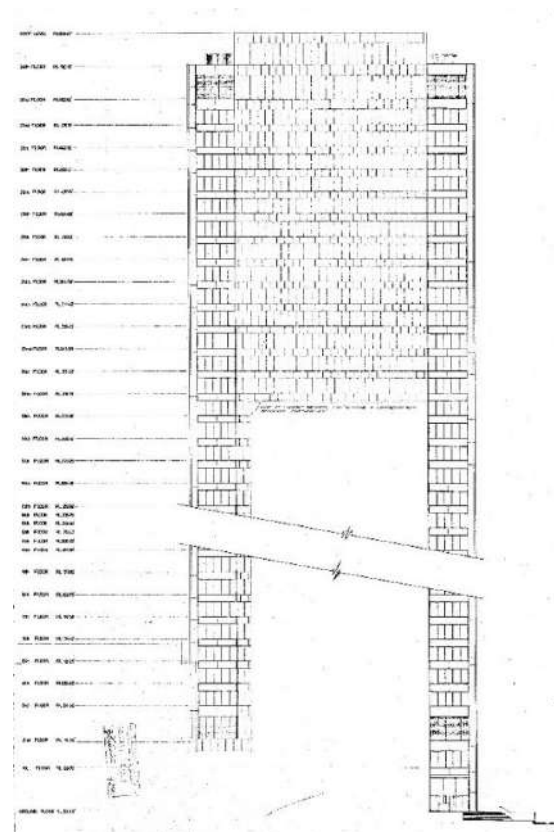


Figure 4. East elevation. Drawing by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated January 1972 (BAP).



Figure 5. Illustration of the building published in the Nov/Dec 1974 issue of *Architect*, advertising reconstructed granite cladding by Melocco.





Figure 6. The tower under construction; photo dated c1975 (SLV, Hans Bonney, photographer, Image H2009.50/262).



Figure 7. Interior of the completed banking chamber (Goad 2004:209).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street is a 33-storey commercial building located on the south side of Collins Street between Queen Street and Elizabeth Street. The building has frontages to both Collins Street and Flinders Lane and is accessible from both frontages. Constructed from c1972-75 to a design by Bates, Smart & McCutcheon, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building is of rectangular form with narrow façades to Collins Street and Flinders Lane. The building is set back approximately 8 metres from Collins Street – a feature for which additional height to the building was allowed. The building is also set back from the adjoining building to the west (Ryrie Lane at the rear) and partially set back from the adjoining building to the east (Fulham Place at the rear). The main tower building is set well back from Flinders Lane, with a double-level podium occupying this space. The podium comprises access stairs leading to the elevated Collins Street entry to the east and an access ramp to the basement carpark on the western boundary at Ryrie Lane.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction, with the trabeated structure clearly expressed on the north, south and west curtain wall facades. This results in a regular grid-like pattern across these facades, formed from reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall units. Wide spandrels, with rows of deeply recessed aluminium-framed glazing, sit flush with continuous vertical piers that rise uninterrupted from above street level. The grid-like patterning continues around the building to the corners of the east façade. Abutting an existing building on the adjoining site when the subject place was constructed, the eastern wall is primarily a plain façade.

A low-scale, double-storey structure has recently been built across the Collins Street façade at ground level, utilising the original eight-metre setback of the multi-storey building. This is a glazed structure with light framing and central projecting canopy. Alterations have also been made to the rear podium in Flinders Lane, however the general form has been retained.

## INTEGRITY

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in c1972-75. A recent addition to the Collins Street frontage of the building at street level has altered the original design at this frontage.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey office building design. The building's three grid-like walls of clearly expressed structure, clad with precast granite-faced concrete panels, dominated the skyline when constructed as the tallest building in the CBD in the 1970s. Despite the redesign of the street-level facade, the dominant upper facades of the Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation building remain highly intact to their original design and can be clearly observed from Collins Street and Flinders Lane.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)

- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).



One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)





Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kelle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)





Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street  
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William  
Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot  
Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre  
McIntyre & Partners, c1972-73)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird &  
Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen  
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

### Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, the Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to a number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings listed above, the subject building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

### MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

### OTHER

N/A

## REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

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City of Melbourne Maps (CoMMaps), Site Details.

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National Trust of Australia, Victoria (NTAV) (September 2014), *Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism, A Comparative Analysis of Post-War Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD 1955 -1975*.

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Schiavello, '367 Collins St', <<https://www.schiavello.com/construction/projects/commercial/367-collins-st>>, accessed 26 June 2019.

State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, photographers and images as cited.

*The Age*.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 1993</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Review of Heritage Overlay Listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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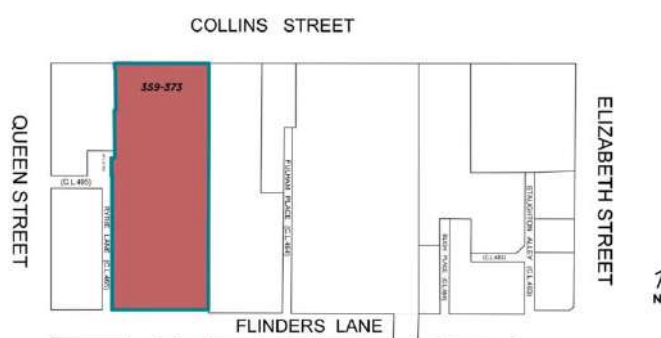
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed c1972-75.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the lower levels are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in c1972-75 to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960 to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 33-storey structure, the Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building clearly demonstrates typical

characteristics of a later postwar commercial building, including three grid-like walls of clearly expressed structure, and the use of materials such as granite-faced precast concrete panel cladding. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

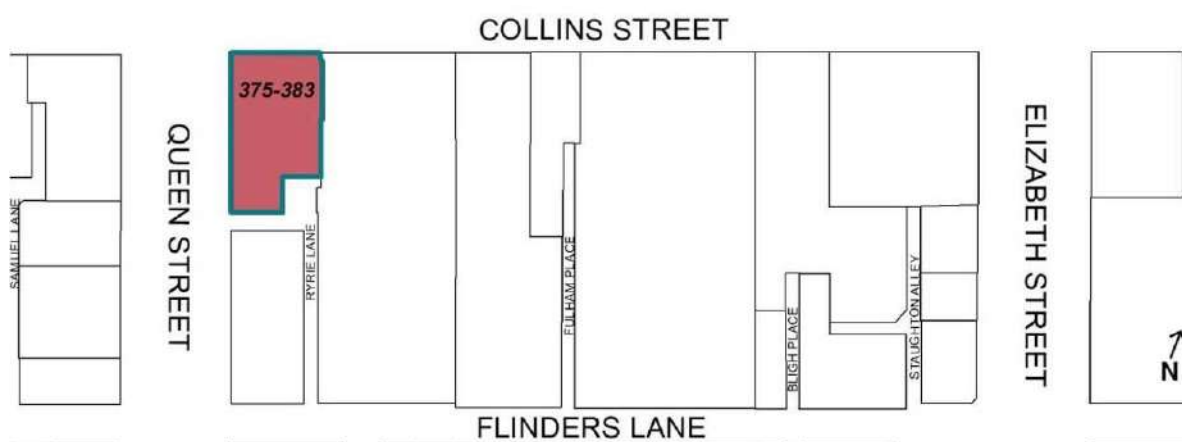
**Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Legal & General House
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102093



SURVEY DATE: March 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE  
INVENTORY

N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE  
OVERLAY

No

PLACE TYPE

Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED  
CATEGORY

Significant

FORMER GRADE

Ungraded

DESIGNER /  
ARCHITECT / ARTIST:Bernard Evans, Murphy,  
Berg & Hocking

BUILDER:

E A Watts Pty Ltd

DEVELOPMENT  
PERIOD:Postwar Period (1945-  
1975)DATE OF CREATION /  
MAJOR  
CONSTRUCTION:

1967

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office
1920s	Office
1960s	Office

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

## SUMMARY

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne, is a 17-storey postwar office building built in 1967 to a design by architects Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking in the Post-War Modernist style. The building opened in 1967 for Legal & General Assurance Society Limited and was occupied by that company until 1993. *It continues to be used as offices today.*

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17).

Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

The subject site of 375-383 Collins Street forms part of Crown Allotment 18, Block 4, first purchased by Arthur Willis for J McIntyre for £42 in 1837 ('Plan of Melbourne' 1838; DCLS 1839). By the late nineteenth century Block 4 was developed with mostly masonry buildings of three to five storeys.

Commercial businesses, predominantly in the fields of banking and insurance, populated Block 4 and continued to make up the dominant industry in that block into the twentieth century (Mahlstedt Map no 4, 1888). In 1887 a building permit was registered for the subject site for the construction of an eight-storey building for merchant F W Prell. David Mitchell oversaw the construction of the substantial building to the design of architect Francis Maloney White (MCC registration no 3102, as cited in AAI, record no 71566; Broome et al 2016:2). The building, occupied by several commercial agencies, including North British & Mercantile Insurance, was one of three highly ornate buildings known as Prell's Buildings, all built on prominent corner sites with Queen Street frontages, constructed by Mitchell and designed by White (see Figure 1) (Broome et al 2016). At the time of their construction, Prell's Buildings were amongst Melbourne's tallest (*Bendigo Advertiser* 15 June 1888:3; Mahlstedt Map section 1 no 15, 1910). In 1929 the building on the subject site was extensively remodelled for the Australian Provincial Assurance Association (APA) (*Argus* 14 September 1929:6). As part of the remodelling, the APA erected a tower atop the building that was described, following its completion,



as a new landmark on the site of Prell's Building (see Figure 2) (*Argus* 28 June 1930:6). The building became known as the Australian Provincial Assurance (APA) Building during this time. APA occupied the ground floor of the building and leased the above ground storeys to commercial tenants, many of whom were insurance or banking organisations (S&Mc 1940).

Prior to construction of the subject building, English company Legal & General Assurance Society Limited acquired the 1887 building in 1954 to commence operations in Australia (CT:V6002 F251). In 1955, the Legal & General Assurance Society Limited and APA occupied the ground floor of the 1887 building (S&Mc 1955). The following year Legal & General Assurance established its first Australian branch at 375-383 Collins Street, which opened in 1956, and the building became known as the Legal & General Building (*Age* 6 August 1955:27; *Sydney Morning Herald* 31 December 1955:25; S&Mc 1960). Legal & General retained ownership of the subject site until 1993 (CT:V6002 F51).

Legal & General Assurance Society Limited was formed in London in 1836 as the New Law Life Assurance Society, restricted to those in the legal profession. The name was changed to Legal & General Life Assurance Society in the 1920s when policies were made available to the general public. The society expanded in the United Kingdom and acquired a number of overseas life assurance companies, and by 1956, Legal & General Assurance reputedly had the largest ordinary insurance branch business in the United Kingdom. By the 1960s, the company's assets were valued at £1 billion (Legal & General Group 2019; *Age* 4 February 1956:5).

Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd announced the establishment of its first life assurance branch in Australia, in Melbourne, in 1956 (*Age* 4 February 1956:5). The company's subsidiary, the Gresham Fire & Accident Society, had operated in Australia from 1912.

Legal & General Assurance's business invested several million pounds in Australia and grew exponentially in the late 1950s. Between 1946 and 1958, the Society's assets increased from £100 million to £400 million (*Age* 14 January 1959:6). The Society was formally admitted to the Life Offices' Assurance Society for Australasia in 1966 (*Age* 21 December 1966:11).

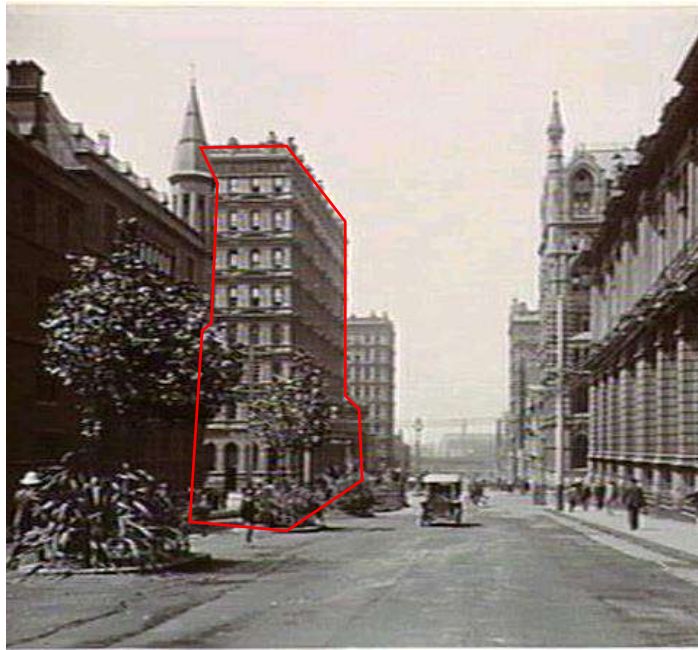


Figure 1. Queen Street looking south showing Prell's Buildings, c1913-1914. The Prell's building that was formerly located on the subject site is outlined in red. (Source: SLV)



Figure 2. Prell's Building on the subject site during remodelling in 1929. (Source: *Argus* 14 September 1929:6)

In 1965 Legal & General Assurance filed a building application for the erection of a new building valued at £1,300,000 on the subject site (MBAI). In 1966-67 E A Watts constructed the 17-storey building, named Legal & General House, to a design by architects Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hockey (see Figure 3) (CoMMaps). During its construction, an article in the *Age* described the building as contributing to Melbourne's changing skyline, because of its height and the coppery glow of its façade, designed for sun and glare protection. The building's heat-reflecting glass cladding, an innovation at the time, incorporated a transparent gold coating capable of resisting and reflecting infrared sun waves (*Age* 25 October 1966:13). The newspaper article noted that the new building would feature a paved and landscaped forecourt set 20 feet back from Collins Street, and be faced

with white mosaic tiles articulated with black mosaic tile recess



(see

Figure 4) (*Age* 25 October 1966:13).

In 1967, space in Legal & General House was advertised for lease. Each level was air-conditioned and comprised 6315 square feet of space on each floor (*Age* 28 June 1967:11). By 1970, the majority of the floors had been filled by multiple commercial enterprises, many belonging to insurance and brokering agencies. Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd occupied the ground floor and Capel Courts Securities Ltd occupied several other floors within the building in 1974 (S&Mc 1970, 1974). Internal partitions were added and removed within the building from the 1960s through to the 1980s (MBAI).

In 1984 the entrance and lobby were refurbished, and a canopy erected to cover exposed decorative beams within the courtyard (MBAI). The ground-level façade was faced with marble cladding the following year, concurrent with alterations to the ground and seventh floors (MBAI).

The Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd became a wholly owned division of the Legal & General Group in the 1970s. In 1991, the company decided to abandon the Melbourne property market and concentrate on its portfolio in Sydney, Brisbane and possibly Canberra (*Age* 23 October 1991:24). In October 1991, the Legal & General Group announced that it planned to sell Legal & General House, its last remaining Melbourne building, for between \$15 and \$20 million (*Age* 23 October 1991:24). Director of Legal & General noted that the building was offered at a 'realistic price' because it required extensive refurbishment (*Age* 23 October 1991:24). With its headquarters in London, Legal & General continues to operate today, offering investment management, lifetime mortgages, pensions, annuities, life assurance, and general insurance (Legal & General Group 2019).

The subject building was sold in 1993 to Perpetual Nominees Ltd, which subsequently carried out a series of refurbishment works to the building with the bulk of work taking place in 1998. It is likely that components of the 1998 refurbishment involved the clear green tinted glazing clad to the ground level and an open balcony with glass balustrade, metal railing (CT:6002 F251; CoMMaps).

Offices in the building continued to be occupied by the legal and financial professions through the 1990s-2000s (*Age* 15 May 1995:25; 23 December 2000:80).

The building presently houses offices occupied by 36 businesses (CoMMaps).

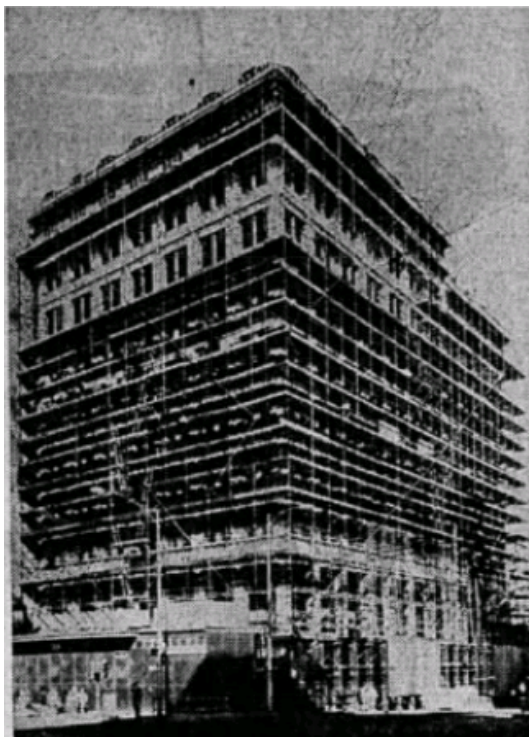


Figure 3. New Legal & General House under construction, 1966. (Source: *Age* 25 October 1966:13)



Figure 4. Photograph showing Legal & General House completed. (Source: Crothers 1967, SLV)

*Bernard Evans (Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking), architect*

Bernard Evans (1905-1981) was an architect, builder and civic leader. Born in Manchester, his family emigrated in 1913 and Bernard worked for his father as a designer and builder, studied at the Working Man's College (now RMIT University) and established the Premier Building Company in 1928. His expansive career spanned a period as Melbourne City Councillor (1949-73) and Lord Mayor (1959, 1960). Evans was known for his work on flats and public housing. His work in the 1950s and 60s was concerned with office buildings and the Emerald Hill Court Estate in South Melbourne. His impressive Ampol House (1958) with the spiral staircase, at the corner of Grattan Street and Elizabeth Street, was demolished in 2012 (Dunstan 2012:237-8).

Evans campaigned for the removal of the 40-metre (132-foot) height limit for buildings in the city centre. His architectural firm of Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking Pty Ltd was disbanded in 1975 following Evans' resignation in 1971. A larger than life figure, he was knighted in 1962 but faced allegations of conflict of interest with his private companies and his role as a Councillor for the City of Melbourne (Dunstan 2012:237-8).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne, is a 17-storey reinforced concrete frame commercial building, originally constructed in 1967 and refurbished at ground level in



1998. The building exhibits characteristics of the Post-War Modernist style, evident in its strong modular format reflective glass cladding. Located on a prominent corner with frontages to both Queen Street and Collins Street, the building has an 'L-shape' footprint and also has a rear frontage to Ryrie Lane.

The ground level main entry to the building is on the Queen Street frontage, enclosed by a projecting steel and glass 'loggia' that occupies the original set back space to the Queen Street boundary. At the top of the building there is a thin 'floating' roof slab supported by columns aligned with the main structural grid.

The Legal & General House was notable for being '...faced with white mosaic tiles articulated with black mosaic tile recess(es)', the glass used in its windows that featured '...transparent gold coating capable of resisting and reflecting infra-red sun waves' and other aspects of its design and planning including the '... paved and landscaped forecourt set 20 feet back from Collins Street'. The mosaic tiling and tinted glazing remain extant. Between the bottom and top levels, the façade exhibits a robust grid pattern created with three-dimensional square panels clad in white mosaic tiles, contrasted with a recessed black mosaic tiled surfaces. Each module of white mosaic-tiled square precast concrete frame surrounds a copper mosaic-tiled internal panel surrounding paired windows with gold-tinted glazing.

The overall strong modularity of the facades of the building also continued down to the ground plane as rectangular columns, so that the facade at street level was dominated by the double height colonnade (see figure 4). While still extant, the ground floor colonnade is now partially overlaid by the recent glass cladding.

In what is understood to be major components of its 1998 refurbishment, the ground level to the Queen Street and Collins Street frontages are clad in clear green tinted frameless glazing fixed to the reinforced concrete structure, and with thin horizontal aluminium spandrels. On the south-western corner is a small, open balcony with glass balustrade, metal railing and compact canopy overhead supported by two squat, rectangular concrete columns.

## **INTEGRITY**

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street is highly intact with few changes visible to original fabric. Above the ground and first floor levels, the building retains its original modular pattern of fenestration, original stylistic details, and with original materials to wall surfaces and glazing. The thin 'floating' roof slab supported by columns is also retained. The distinctive ground floor colonnade has been partially obscured by clear and green tinted frameless glazing with thin horizontal aluminium spandrels, reducing the visual impact of the double height colonnade, although at street level on the southern and eastern elevations the original rectangular concrete columns are extant. The original setback from Queen Street, a notable feature of the original building design, has also been partially enclosed by a projecting steel and glass 'loggia'. The building also retains its original built form and scale, configuration, and materiality. Overall the building has high integrity.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The 1950s saw the development of the modern multi-story office building in Melbourne, often built for insurance companies or finance companies, or for professional offices. From this time through to the mid 1970s, the Post-War Modernist style enjoyed widespread popularity, particularly for high-rise



commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Reinforced concrete frames provided the structural systems, allowing the façade to be clad in a non-load bearing curtain wall. In early examples, curtain walls were typically fully glazed, while in later examples, precast concrete was used to achieve variety of expression and flexibility of form, led by Bates Smart McCutcheon's South British Building of 1960-62.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Royal Insurance Group building. These are detailed below.

#### **State-significant places**

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)

Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)

Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)

Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)

BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

#### **Locally-significant places**

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

*Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)





Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)





Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street (Yuncken Freeman, 196)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street  
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William  
Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street  
(Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building,  
359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,  
c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan  
Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen  
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)





Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

## Analysis

In its early use of a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade system, the former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street is comparable to a number of other buildings in central Melbourne constructed at a similar time. It is particularly comparable with the Royal Insurance Group Building at 430-442 Collins Street (interim HO1010) and the Scottish Amicable Building at 128-146 Queen Street (HO1213). It shares with these examples characteristics consistent with the Post-War Modernist style, including concrete post and slab construction, a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade with a repetitive modular geometry and a double or triple height street level undercroft and colonnade (altered for the subject building). The façade panels of the former Legal & General House have a more pronounced appearance than the abovementioned examples, although on close inspection reveal fine detailing in the mosaic-tiled wall surfaces.

The former Legal & General House is also comparable with other above buildings as an early example of a high-rise commercial building constructed following the abolition of the 40-metre height limit for buildings in the city centre.

The buildings above almost all share a history of construction for large insurance, assurance or banking organisations, and reflect the increased economic activity of the 1950s-70s in Melbourne that facilitated the construction of new bank buildings and the headquarters of national companies and corporations, including insurance companies. In Melbourne this activity was concentrated in the traditional centre of commerce and finance, west of Elizabeth Street in Queen and Collins streets, established from the late nineteenth century. The comparative examples including the subject building reflect this pattern of activity.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
✓	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
✓	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).



**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

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## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 1993</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
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<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded
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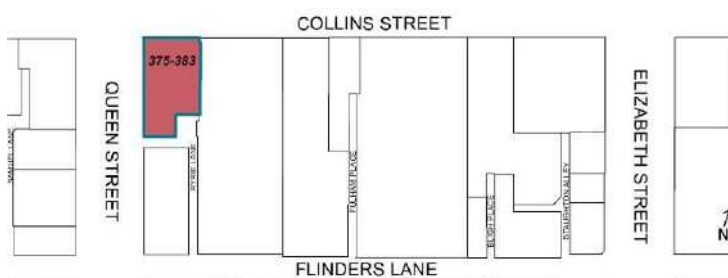
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Legal & General House



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne, built 1967, is significant.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- Original form and scale;
- Original modular composition of façades comprising precast concrete panels with inset windows;
- Original external materials including mosaic tiles, glazing, remaining fabric of the original colonnade; and,
- 'Floating' roof slab supported by columns.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street is of historic, representative, aesthetic and technical significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The former Legal & General House is historically significant for the evidence it provides of Melbourne's postwar development and rapid growth of corporate architecture. Constructed in 1967 to a design by architects Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, the building demonstrates the pattern in 1950s-70s' Melbourne of increased economic activity that facilitated the construction of new bank buildings and headquarters of national and international companies and corporations. Many of these companies were banking, insurance and assurance related. In Melbourne this activity was concentrated west of Elizabeth

Street in Queen and Collins streets from the late nineteenth century. Legal & General House is located within this precinct, occupying the site of the earlier 1887 Prell's Buildings. The Prell's Buildings were occupied by commercial agencies including North British & Mercantile Insurance, and the Australian Provincial Assurance Association and were owned by Legal & General Assurance Society from 1954. (Criterion A)

The former Legal & General House is significant as a highly intact example of a Post-War Modernist style commercial building in central Melbourne. The building exhibits key characteristics of the style, including concrete post and slab construction, a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade with a repetitive modular geometry, and a double height street level undercroft and colonnade. Although the undercroft and colonnade have been altered in part, and are partially obscured, original fabric remains which enables the original building form and style at ground level to be appreciated. The former Legal & General House is also representative of the early wave of high-rise commercial buildings constructed following the abolition of the 40-metre (132-foot) height limit for buildings in the city centre. (Criterion D)

The former Legal & General House is significant for the retention of fine original detailing, including original mosaic-tiled wall surfaces, and copper tinted glazing which was noted at the time of its completion as creating a coppery glow to the façade. The glazing was also noted at the time as innovative, designed for sun and glare protection. The building's height and the aesthetic effect of the glazing were key factors contributing to the building's distinctive aesthetic prominence in Melbourne's changing skyline. (Criteria E and F)

#### **Primary source**

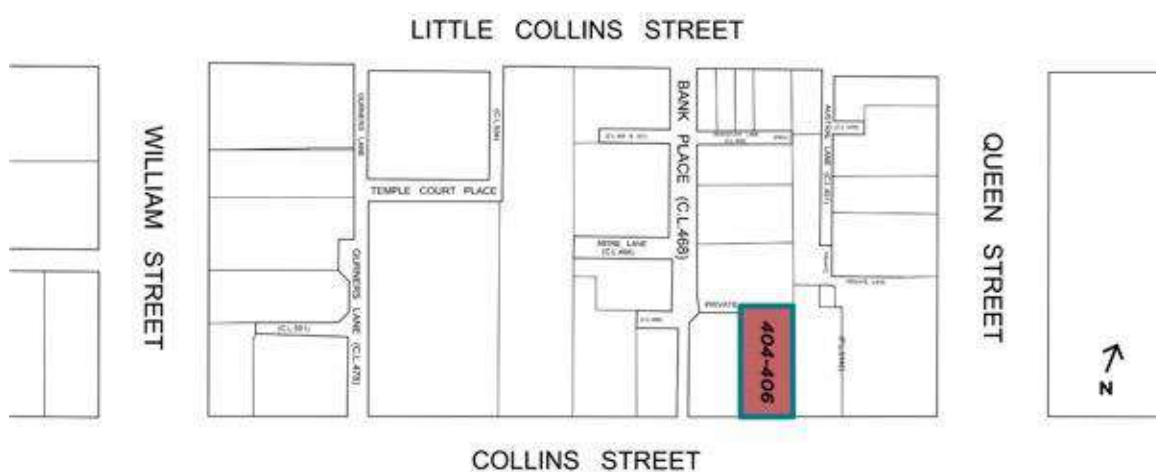
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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)





<b>SITE NAME</b>	Atlas Assurance Building [also known as Praemium House]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	404-406 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102129



SURVEY DATE: May 2017

SURVEY BY: Context

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	N/A	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	Yes – interim controls HO1008
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	C
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	H Garnet Alsop & Partners	<b>BUILDER:</b>	E.A Watts
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1965)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1958-61

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Offices
1920s	Offices
1960s	Offices – services

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** refer to map

## SUMMARY

The former Atlas Assurance Building is an 11-storey steel framed reinforced concrete office building. It is an early example of curtain wall construction. Designed by H Garnet Alsop & Partners, it was refurbished in 1993 with the facade refurbished in 2001. It features a bronze statue of Atlas at the front of the building that was associated with the Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical

presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

### **SITE HISTORY**

The site on which the former Atlas Assurance building is located was formerly occupied by the National Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria. The company began in 1869 in Melbourne and expanded across Australia throughout the early 1900s, amalgamating with many smaller mutual societies ('National Mutual Life Association of Australasia' 2011).

This steel-framed and reinforced concrete building was erected in 1957-8 for the Atlas Assurance Co Ltd by builders EA Watts Pty. Ltd., initially as basement, ground, mezzanine and six upper levels, to the design of architects and engineers' H Garnett Alsop & Partners. The estimated cost was £310,000. Within two years of completion, another four levels were added to take it to just over the city's building height limit of 40 metres (132 feet) (Figure 1). The same architects and builder were commissioned to complete the additional storeys.

The Atlas Company was a successful insurance company founded in 1808, with international branches that followed its establishment in Britain. 404-406 Collins Street was the company's head



office for both New Zealand and Australia. The building's construction coincided with the erection of a number of large insurance and assurance company offices nearby in what was Melbourne's financial centre.



Figure 1. 404-406 Collins Street in 1961. (Source: Fowler 1961, SLV H92.20/7132 [copyright](#))

#### *Howard Garnet Alsop, architect*

In March 1926, 17-year old Howard Garnet Alsop became an articled pupil of his architect uncle. Between 1930 and 1932, Alsop studied at the University of Melbourne Architectural Atelier and was registered as an architect in December 1931. After working as a draftsman with the Melbourne Electricity Supply Company he gained a position in the office of Godfrey and Spowers in 1934. (Built Heritage 2017).

In April 1936, Alsop left Melbourne for an extended overseas tour of England (where he worked in the London office of Wallis, Gilbert and Partners), Germany, Scandinavia, Russia and the USA. After returning to Australia in July 1937, he opened an office in Melbourne. His first client was Ivan Holyman of ANA, who commissioned the young architect to design the new airline terminal and hangar complex at Essendon Aerodrome. Subsequently appointed as the company's official architect, Alsop continued to design buildings for ANA until the airline merged with Ansett in 1957 (Built Heritage 2017).

In 1946, Alsop renamed his practice H Garnet Alsop and Partners, architects and engineers. The firm thrived in the postwar era, with Alsop's practice expanding to include factories, multi-storey city offices, and health-related projects. (Built Heritage 2017).

In 1978, Alsop retired as senior partner of the firm bearing his name. The business was carried on by four remaining partners: long-time staff members Hugh Pettit and Ian Freeland, and Alsop's two architect sons, David and John. Alsop's brother Dennis and other son Rodney also remained involved, in their respective capacities of consulting engineer and quantity surveyor. In 1982, the office merged with another long-running practice of pre-war origin, Leighton Irwin Australia, to create a new entity, Leighton Irwin-Garnet Alsop Pty Ltd, abbreviated as the Irwin-Alsop Group.

Howard Garnet Alsop died on 3 October 1994, aged 85 years. His practice continued to operate as the Irwin-Alsop Group until 2008, when it merged with Whitefield McQueen to form Whitefield

McQueen Irwin Alsop, or WMIA. The practice was subsequently absorbed in 2012 by Group GSA, a large international and multi-disciplinary practice that continues to this day (Built Heritage 2017).

### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The former Atlas Assurance Building is an 11-storey steel framed reinforced concrete office building with a basement and mezzanine. An early example of curtain wall construction, it incorporates marble spandrel panels within the facade design (Figure 1). The façade curtain wall system is constructed of anodised aluminium framed with marble spandrels and 'Polyglass' (originally specified as 'Thermopane') double glazed polished plate window units.

Internally, the service core is arranged along the west wall with stairs at either end and a light court midway on the east wall. Suspended plaster ceilings are used throughout with air-conditioning as an advance on the natural ventilation. The floor slabs are turned up at the façade edge to provide fire-rated spandrels to sill height with the sills finished in reconstructed granite.

The ground level has a grand folding glass door set across the entry at the west end of the façade, leading to a glass lobby screen and terrazzo paving beyond. It features a bronze statue of Atlas at the front of the building, originally part of the Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria building that formerly occupied the site.

### **INTEGRITY**

The ground level interior and façade were modified in the 1980s and the statue of Atlas relocated to a niche at the west end (although a panel on the wall states that the statue is in its original position). However, the upper-level façade remains generally as built. The building was refurbished internally in 1993 and the façade in 2001.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The former Atlas Assurance Building at 404-406 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1950s multi-storey commercial building design.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former Atlas Assurance Building. These are detailed below.

#### **State-significant places**

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

#### **Locally-significant places**

### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those from the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Newton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Merton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

### *Other Examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as individually significant heritage places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).





Former London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (B Evans & Partners, 1960) (Interim HO1006).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).





Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street  
(Meldrum & Noad, 1957).

Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates  
Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).

### **Analysis**

404-406 Collins Street, has been refurbished at ground level and the interior, a common occurrence with many postwar office buildings. It is however more intact than its neighbour at 410 Collins Street and 170 Queen Street where there has been a complete renewal of the curtain wall façade. 404-406 Collins Street is still legible as a commercial office of the 1950s, retaining its façade and scale. It is an intact representative example of a 1950s office building and very few of these places are yet to be included on the Heritage Overlay.

## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
✓	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Fowler, Lyle 1961, 'Atlas Assurance building, 406 Collins Street', State Library of Victoria: Harold Paynting collection. H series, accessed online June 2019.

Goad, P 1999, *Melbourne Architecture*.

Goad, P & Willis, J(eds.) 2012, *An Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press.

Google Street View 2017, 404-406 Collins Street, Google Maps, accessed online 27 June 2017.

Lewis, Miles 2012 'Curtain Wall' in Goad, Philip & Willis, Julie (eds) 2012, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Marsden, Susan 2000, *Urban Heritage: the rise and postwar development of Australia's capital city centres*, Australian Council of National Trusts and Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

'National Mutual Life Association of Australasia (1869-)' 2011, via *Trove*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.party-636066>, accessed online 12 June 2019.

National Trust Classification Report

National Trust of Australia Victoria (NTAV) 2014, *Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism*, National Trust (Victoria), Melbourne.

The following sources and data were used for this assessment (Graeme Butler, 2011). Note that the citation prepared in 2011 did not provide in text referencing.

Storey, Rohan 2008, 'Skyscrapers' in *eMelbourne*, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM01383b.htm>, accessed 13 June 2017.

### *General sources*

The following data was typically drawn from:

Historic Buildings Preservation Council reports on the Melbourne Central Business District from the 1970s;

Melbourne City Council on-line i-Heritage database;

Mahlstedt fire insurance map series held in the State Library of Victoria collection and Melbourne University Archives;

Daily newspaper reports such as 'The Argus';

Australian Architecture Index (AAI), prepared by Professor Miles Lewis and others;

Melbourne City Council building application drawings and files held at Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Public Records Office.

Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects

Graeme Butler, 1982-3, Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects: cites Building Permit Applications;

Building Permit Applications

9/6/1957, 31535 £310,000 ;

24/10/1960, 34487 added storeys to 406, £238,000. (not at VPRO)

National Trust of Australia (Vic) File B5345

Contains article in Architecture in Australia June 1959 David Saunders, 'Office Buildings in Melbourne' examining recent office construction types and costs.

'Building Ideas' 1965 guide

March 1965: included on the architectural guide for the Australian architectural convention- 'Royal Exchange Assurance 406 Collins Street H. Garnet Alsop and Partners, Six storeys, 1958; additional four floors, 1961.

*The Argus*

Tuesday 3 February 1953 City Personal

Tuesday 10 February 1948 City Personal

Monday 15 September 1902

Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories



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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985**

C

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**Central City Heritage  
Study Review 1993**

C

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**Review of Heritage  
overlay listings in the  
CBD 2002**

C

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**

C

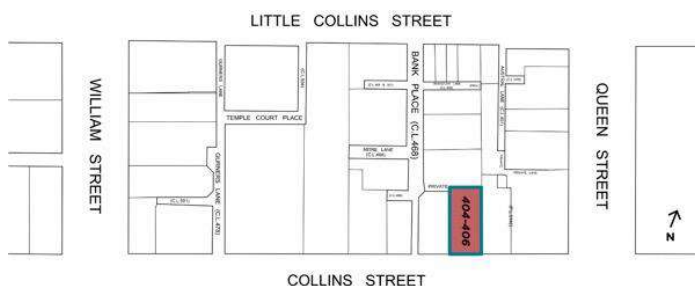
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Atlas Assurance Building



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



## What is significant?

The former Atlas Assurance building at 404-406 Collins Street, Melbourne, completed in 1958-1961 to a design by H Garnet Alsop.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing; and
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

## How it is significant?

The former Atlas Assurance building at 404-406 Collins Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

## Why it is significant?

The former Atlas Assurance building is historically significant for its association with postwar development, and with the expansion of large companies undertaking construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. A related object, the Federation-era statue of Atlas is historically significant as an artefact from the Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria that occupied the same site. (Criterion A)

The former Atlas Assurance building is significant as a relatively intact, curtain-walled office building from the postwar period and demonstrating the style embraced by local architects by the late 1950s. In

particular it employs a curtain-wall façade that makes the transition from the all-glass wall to the combination of solid spandrels of masonry, coloured glass or enameled metal sheeting of the 1960s. (Criterion D)

Aesthetically, the former Atlas Assurance building presents a sealed aluminium-framed curtain wall just a few years after the first multi-storey glass box was built in Australia. The use of marble spandrels on the curtain wall and granite at the base of the building emulated in a modern manner the stone clad classical facades favoured previously by financial institutions. Attributes of the building that demonstrate aesthetic value include the façade curtain wall system with anodised aluminium frames with marble spandrels and 'Polyglass' double glazed polished plate windows, all of which were remarked upon in the architectural periodical *Cross-section*. (Criterion E)

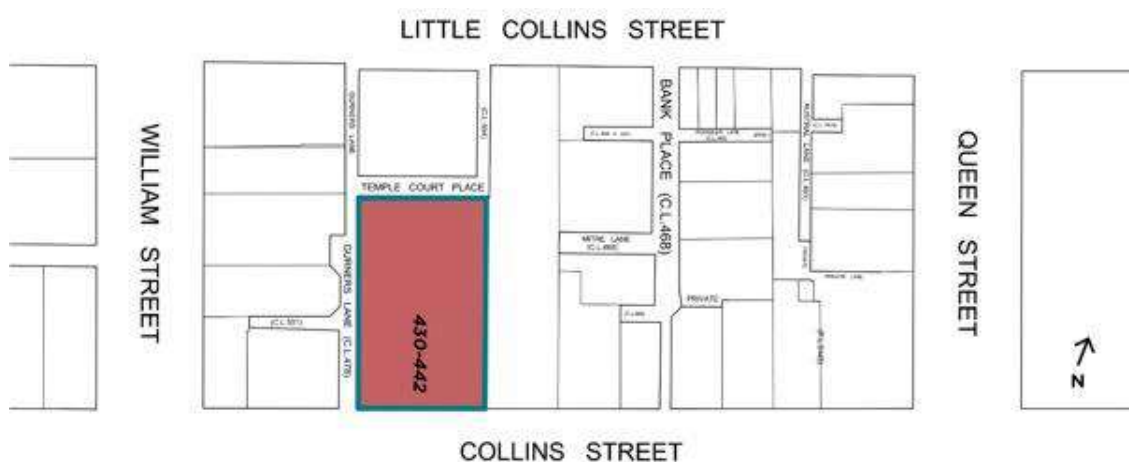
### **Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Royal Insurance Group building
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	430-442 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102124



**SURVEY DATE:** May 2017

**SURVEY BY:** Context

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	N/A	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	Yes – interim controls HO1010
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Yuncken Freeman	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	A
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1965)	<b>BUILDER:</b>	E A Watts Pty Ltd
		<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1966



## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotel
1920s	Hotel
1960s	Office

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

## SUMMARY

The Royal Insurance Group building is a 17-storey modern office building designed by Yuncken Freeman Architects and built in 1966. It represents the continuing importance of the banking, finance and insurance industries in the remaking of Melbourne in the postwar period.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding,

screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17).

Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

### **SITE HISTORY**

In 1860, Edward Scott purchased the Clarendon Hotel and constructed the much grander Scott's Hotel on the site. After being purchased by the Royal Insurance Co. in 1961, Scott's Hotel was demolished the following year to make way for the current office tower (Spicer 2008). The Royal Insurance Company Ltd was established in London in 1845. By the 1960s, they had built up national head offices, branches and subsidiaries in Australia.

The company's new head office was designed by Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty. Ltd., and constructed by builders, E A Watts Pty Ltd. The total cost was estimated at £3 million.

Yuncken Freeman was awarded the Victorian Architecture Medal in 1967 for 430-442 Collins Street. The building in 1967 can be seen in Figure 1. The building is included on the Australian Institute of Architects Twentieth Century Buildings Register.



Figure 1. Royal Insurance Group building in 1967. (Source: Fowler 1967, SLV H92.20/9742 [copyright](#)).

*Yuncken Freeman, architects*

In the 1960s Melbourne-based practice Yuncken Freeman was one of the largest architectural firms in Australia, with a reputation for modern, high quality design and meticulous detailing. The firm originated in 1933 when Otto Abrecht Yuncken (1903-1951) and brothers John (1898-1962) and Tom Freeman (1904-1971) set up practice. In the 1930s the firm's work concentrated on hospital design and high-quality residential work. The commercial and corporate side of the business was built by Barry Patten (1927-2003) and John Gates (1924-1996), when they joined the firm as partners in 1951. Yuncken Freeman was the most successful and prolific architectural practice during the 1960s and 70s, designing many award-winning office buildings in the city. These included Eagle House at 473 Bourke Street, in 1971, (VHR1807, HO901) the BHP tower at 130-148 William Street (VHR1699, HO767) and the Royal Insurance building at 430-442 Collins Street (1965). Yuncken Freeman had an unequalled national reputation for superb architectural detailing and classically simple forms. The firm continued until the late 1980s, completing work for the University of Melbourne, amongst many large institutional and corporate clients (Goad & Willis eds., 2012:781-2).

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The Royal Insurance Company head office is a 17-storey office building with three basement levels of parking and ground level retail. Designed by Yuncken Freeman Architects it was built in 1965. The building was awarded the RVIA Medal for outstanding building of the year in 1967. It was refurbished between 1994-1996.

Reconstructed black granite gives the tower its characteristic dark profile where the stone grains are cast into pre-glazed concrete panels with structural ribs at the vertical joints. The separation of each component, by sophisticated detailing, follows the Modernist principles of the building as an assembly of functional parts rather than a decorated monolith.



The building has a podium with giant colonnades that transition smoothly to the tower above. This remains legible across the façades as a series of tall plate glass windows. Internally, the lofty space created was used skilfully to accommodate a mezzanine level.

### **INTEGRITY**

The building was refurbished in 1994-1996 but still retains its integrity from the exterior.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The Royal Insurance Group building is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey building design. The structure, including the form at street level, remains highly intact to its original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Royal Insurance Group building. These are detailed below.

#### **State-significant places**

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

#### **Locally-significant places**

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

## Precinct Heritage Overlay



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)





Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kollé & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)





Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street  
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William  
Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street  
(Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation  
Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart &  
McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan  
Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen  
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)





Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

## Analysis

Yuncken Freeman's contribution to the design of commercial office buildings in Melbourne is unparalleled as they continued to define and re-define the way in which office buildings were formed and the expression of their facades presented. This has been recognised by numerous architectural awards. 430-442 Collins Street has survived relatively intact and continues to demonstrate the aesthetic values of its time.

## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	<b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	<b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✓	<b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
✓	<b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	<b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	<b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	<b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A



## REFERENCES

Clinch, R J 2012, 'The places we keep: the heritage studies of Victoria and outcomes for urban planners', PhD thesis, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne.

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Goad, P & Willis, J (eds.) 2012, *An Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press

Fowler, Lyle 1967, 'Royal Insurance Group building', State Library of Victoria: Harold Paynting collection. H series, accessed online June 2019.

Marsden, Susan 2000, *Urban Heritage: the rise and postwar development of Australia's capital city centres*, Australian Council of National Trusts and Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

Spicer, Christopher J 2008, 'Scott's Hotel' *eMelbourne*, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/>, accessed 21 June 2017.

The following sources and data were used for this assessment (Graeme Butler, 2011). Note that the citation prepared in 2011 did not provide in text referencing.

### *General sources*

Historic Buildings Preservation Council reports on the Melbourne Central Business District from the 1970s;

Melbourne City Council on-line i-Heritage database;

Mahlstedt fire insurance map series held in the State Library of Victoria collection and Melbourne University Archives;

Australian Architecture Index (AAI), prepared by Professor Miles Lewis and others;

Melbourne City Council building application drawings and files held at Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Public Records Office.

Historic Buildings Preservation Council

Keith and John Reid, CBD Study Area 7 Historic Buildings Preservation Council, 1976

State Library of Victoria collection

Royal Insurance Group office building, 430-442 Collins Street, Melbourne [picture]

\* Author/Creator: Wolfgang Sievers 1913-2007;

\* Contributor(s): Yuncken Freeman Architects;

\* Date(s): 1965

Part of a series showing immaculate interiors, furnishings and spaces

Twentieth Century Architecture Register

Graeme Butler, 1982-3, Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects: architects as Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty. Ltd.; RAIA (Vic) medal 1967 General

Building; Building Permit Application 17/8/1962, 35720; 9/2/1965 for signs indicating open; RAIA (vice) Library of Works card; H. Weston, Summary of Awards for Architecture, report to the R.A.I.A (Victoria) on awards given by the R.A.I.A. (Vic.) and R.V.I.A., (unpublished): 4; periodical articles 1/2/1965 (illus.), 1/5/1967. Est Cost £1,690,000; Roderick Ross & Associates consulting mechanical engineers; Frank C Dixon structural engineer; Lincolne Demaine Scott as electrical engineers; Rider Hunt & Partners QS. Panels have reconstructed black granite finish; typical floor area 12,036 square feet; floor to floor 12'.

Victorian Year Book (VYB) 1972: 662

National Trust of Australia (Vic):430-444 Collins Street, MELBOURNE, Melbourne City

File Number: B6854

Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories

Where required directory extracts were obtained chiefly from Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories dating from the 1850s to 1974.

(D1961 430-444 Scott's Hotel, Gullifer, Miss H confectioner, Mitchell's Dry Cleaning, W Parke Shoe repair, D.J. Buchanan)

#### *Other sources*

Goad, P., 1999 *Melbourne Architecture*

Goad, P. & Willis, J.(eds.), 2012, *An Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press

Marsden, Susan 2000, *Urban Heritage: the rise and postwar development of Australia's capital city centres*, Australian Council of National Trusts and Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

National Trust of Victoria, Australia, 2014, *Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism, A Comparative Analysis of Post-War Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD, 1955 -1975*

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985**

B

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993**

B

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**Review of Heritage  
overlay listings in the  
CBD 2002**

B

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**

A

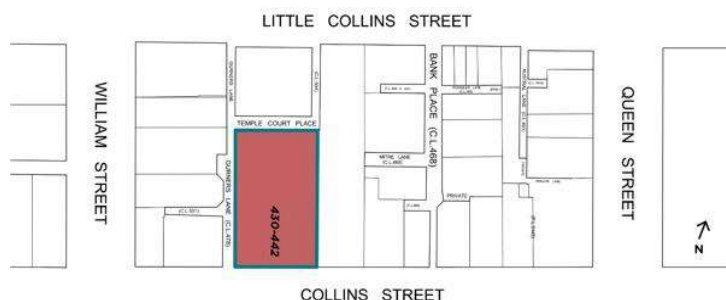
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Royal Insurance Group Building



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

The Royal Insurance Group Company's head office at 430-442 Collins Street, Melbourne, completed in 1966 and designed by Yuncken Freeman.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing; and
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Royal Insurance Group building at 430-442 Collins Street is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The Royal Insurance Group building is historically significant for its association with the rapid growth of high-rise office buildings in the 1960s-mid 1970s postwar period, and with the expansion of large companies undertaking construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. (Criterion A)

The Royal Insurance Group building is a fine, intact and representative example of a modern office tower, many of which were designed by the prominent architectural practice of Yuncken Freeman during the 1960s. As one of the largest architectural firms in Australia, with a reputation for modern, high quality design and meticulous detailing, Yuncken Freeman were one of the most successful and prominent

architectural practices during the 1960s and 70s. The Royal Insurance Company's head office building is a fine example of its class, having retained most of its original external features. (Criterion D)

The Royal Insurance Group building is aesthetically significant for its attributes that include the black granite pre-glazed concrete panels that are expressed in the façade, its podium level of tall glazing carried on columns and its mezzanine level. The aesthetic value of the building is expressed through its highly repetitive façade reflecting the construction system but exploiting this through refined detailing of the jointing design and the colour and finish of the concrete panels. The Royal Insurance Group building is recognised through the awarding of the Victorian Architecture Medal in 1967 and by inclusion on the Australian Institute of Architects Twentieth Century Buildings Register. (Criterion E)

**Primary source**

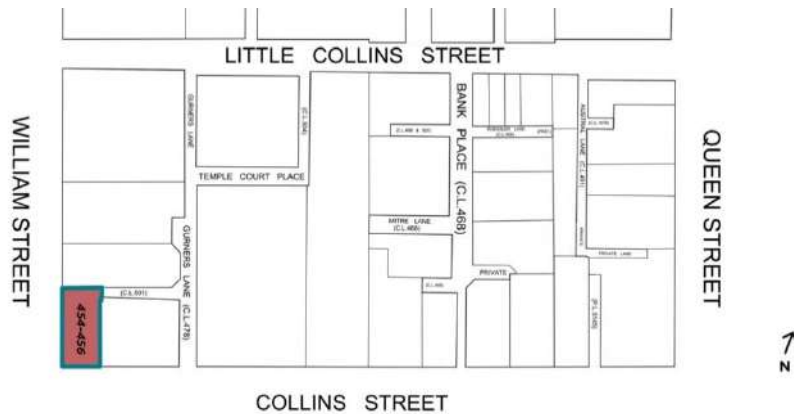
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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)





<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Guardian Building [also known as Christie Offices (current name)]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	454-456 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102122



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** No

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** C

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Bates Smart & McCutcheon

**BUILDER:** J C Taylor & Sons

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1960-1961

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office, Studio, Caretaker, Merchant
1920s	Office, Studio, Caretaker, Merchant, Workshop, Hairdresser, Retail
1960s	Under construction

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The Former Guardian Building on the corner of William and Collins streets was built for owners, Guardian Assurance Co Ltd, in 1960-61, to a design by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.



Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

## SITE HISTORY

The Guardian Building on the corner of William and Collins streets was built for owners Guardian Assurance Co Ltd in 1960-61, to a design by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon (Goat 2004:180). The Guardian Assurance Co occupied an earlier building on the site from c1955, also called the 'Guardian Building', before redeveloping the site. The company appears to have had an earlier presence in the area, occupying an adjacent property 452 Collins Street from c1910 to c1920 (S&Mc).

At the time of construction, the Guardian insurance group had long-established branches in all Australian states. An article published in *The Canberra Times* in June 1960 (18 Jun 1960:11) reported that a Canberra office had just opened, a large building was planned for Sydney, and 'construction of a new 10-storey building at the corner of Collins and William Streets has just been started for the group'.

In September 1959, the University of Melbourne's Department of Architecture publication *Cross-Section* reported that a new building was to be erected for Guardian Assurance at the subject site, at a cost of £350,000, to be faced with Stawell freestone. The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the multi-storey office building in March 1960 (BAI). W E Bassett & Partners were the mechanical engineers and J C Taylor & Sons the builders. The total cost of the building was approximately £500,000 (*Cross-Section*, Apr 1962).

Photos of the newly completed building showed its external form including the entrance and foyer (Figure 3 - Figure 5). *Cross-Section* published an article on the newly completed building in April 1962, providing the opinion that:

*This is prestige-type architecture, conservative, dignified, sober, and rather stuffy.  
Handsomely proportioned windows sit in a natural stone façade.*

The article stated that the building was serviced by air conditioning that was a 'high velocity perimeter induction system with individual controls below window sills', and was built with double glazed windows with heat resistant glass in the outer panes (Figure 6).

The 1965, the Sands & McDougall Directory listed the 'Guardian Building' at 454-456 Collins Street as being occupied by Guardian Assurance Co Ltd, amongst other companies. In 2019 the entrance on the Collins Street elevation bears the name 'Christie Offices'.

### **Bates Smart & McCutcheon**

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon was formed when Osborn McCutcheon joined the existing firm of Bates & Smart in 1926. Bates & Smart had itself been born out of previous iterations of a firm that could be traced back to Reed & Barnes, making it one of the oldest practices in the country (Goad 2012:72). By the 1960s the firm had become one of Australia's largest architectural firms. It exists today as Bates Smart (Goad 2012:72).

During the 1930s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had earned a reputation for designing Georgian-style residences, but also went on to win RVIA awards for their work on the AMP Building in Collins Street (1926-31), Buckley & Nunn Building in Bourke Street (now David Jones, 1933), and the Second Church of Christ Scientist in Camberwell (1936-37).

By the 1950s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had become Australia's 'expert' in high-rise office buildings design (Goad 2012:73). Much of their work at this time was large structures with glass curtain walls. In Melbourne this was exemplified by ICI House, which broke the city's existing 132-foot (40m) height limit in 1955-8 (Goad 2012:73). Other work completed by the firm in the 1950s included the first of the Sleigh Buildings at 158-172 Queen Street Melbourne (1953-55 & 1964), Union House at 43-51 Queen Street Melbourne (1957) and the AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne (1956-58).

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon continued to expand into the 1960s and 70s, with its design approach shifting from glazed curtain walls to facades of artificial stone or prefabricated concrete panels. Works in Melbourne during this period included AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, Bourke Street (1965-69) in association with US firm, Skidmore Owings and Merrill; the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61); the Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street (1961-62) and the Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67) with F C Armstrong.

In the 1970s the firm designed the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne (c1972-75); the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73) and the double tower and plaza complex of Collins Place, Collins Street (1970-80), undertaken in collaboration with international architecture practice, I M Pei. Other notable works by the firm include the large collaborative designs of Melbourne Central with Kisho Kurokawa (1983-92) and Federation Square with Lab Architecture Studio (1997-2002) (Goad 2012:74).





Figure 3. The newly completed building for Guardian Assurance, photo dated 1961 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/58).



Figure 4. The entrance to the building in 1961 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/57).





Figure 5. The foyer to building, photo dated 1961 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/60).



Figure 6. An image of the building published in 1962 (*Cross-Section* No. 114, Apr 1962).





Figure 7. Detail of a 1967 photo showing the corner building (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/402).



Figure 8. The building in 1982 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler16202).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street is a 10-storey commercial building located at the north-east corner of Collins and William streets. Constructed in 1960-61 to a design by Bates, Smart & McCutcheon, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is rectangular in plan with a broad frontage to William Street and a narrow frontage containing the main entrance to Collins Street. Both facades are treated in an identical manner with floors above street level containing rows of rectangular windows, with opaque black spandrel panel, set in a grid-like pattern. Minor facades to the north and east are largely obscured by adjacent buildings, however a vertical strip of openable windows in the east façade is visible at the end of a narrow lane which is accessed from Collins Street, via Gurners Lane. These facades are of concrete block infill with render applied to surface columns and beams.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with facades of stone-faced precast concrete panels and individual inset aluminium-framed windows (some with central pivot) with slim expressed stone frame. In contrast, the upper storey of the building incorporates a set of closely spaced stone mullions which mask aluminium-framed windows behind. Originally housing the board room and other facilities, this detailing continues across the Collins Street façade and, in part, the William Street façade.

At street level, facades are fully glazed between solid piers. An inscribed edge to the stone-faced spandrel above is a simple, yet distinctive, detail.

The building has been reglazed at the ground level in both Collins and William Streets. Originally recessed behind the line of the upper floors, the Collins Street façade at ground level has been reconstructed in line with the face of the building above. The Collins Street entrance remains in the same location however it has been modified. Street level glazing in William Street has been replaced and intermediate stone-clad piers have been removed.

## INTEGRITY

The Former Guardian Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1960-61. Works to the building at street level has altered the original design of this frontage.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's two grid-like curtain walls of regularly spaced rectangular windows set in plain facades of stone-faced precast concrete panels, and contrasting upper level of closely spaced stone mullions, can be clearly observed from both Collins Street and William Street. Despite the redesign of the street-level facade, the upper facades of the Former Guardian Building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Guardian Building. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).





Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

### *Other examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of

design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)





Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kollé & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street  
(Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243  
Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton  
and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins  
Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street  
(Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb,  
1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street  
(unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478  
Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle  
Thorp Walker, 1968-70)